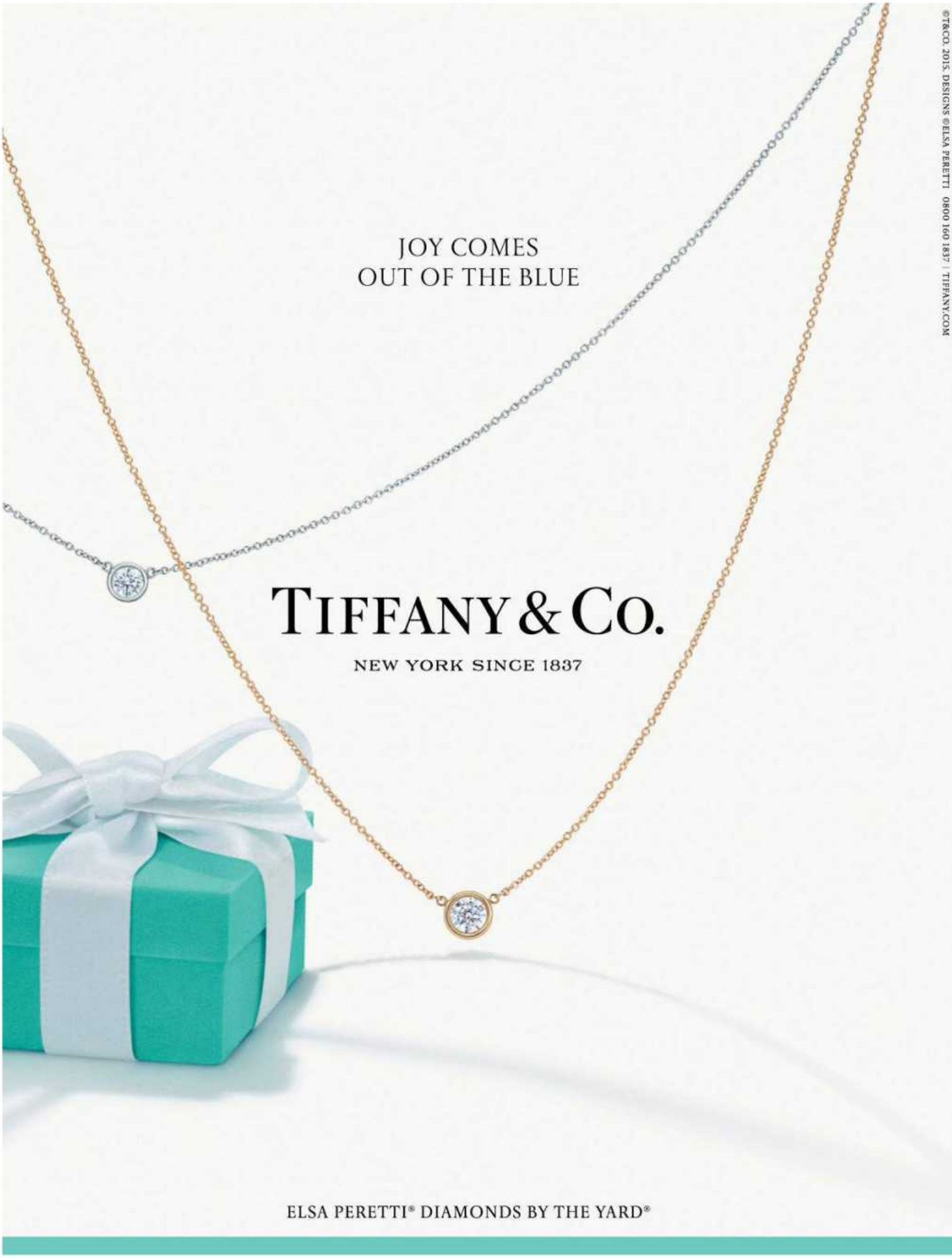

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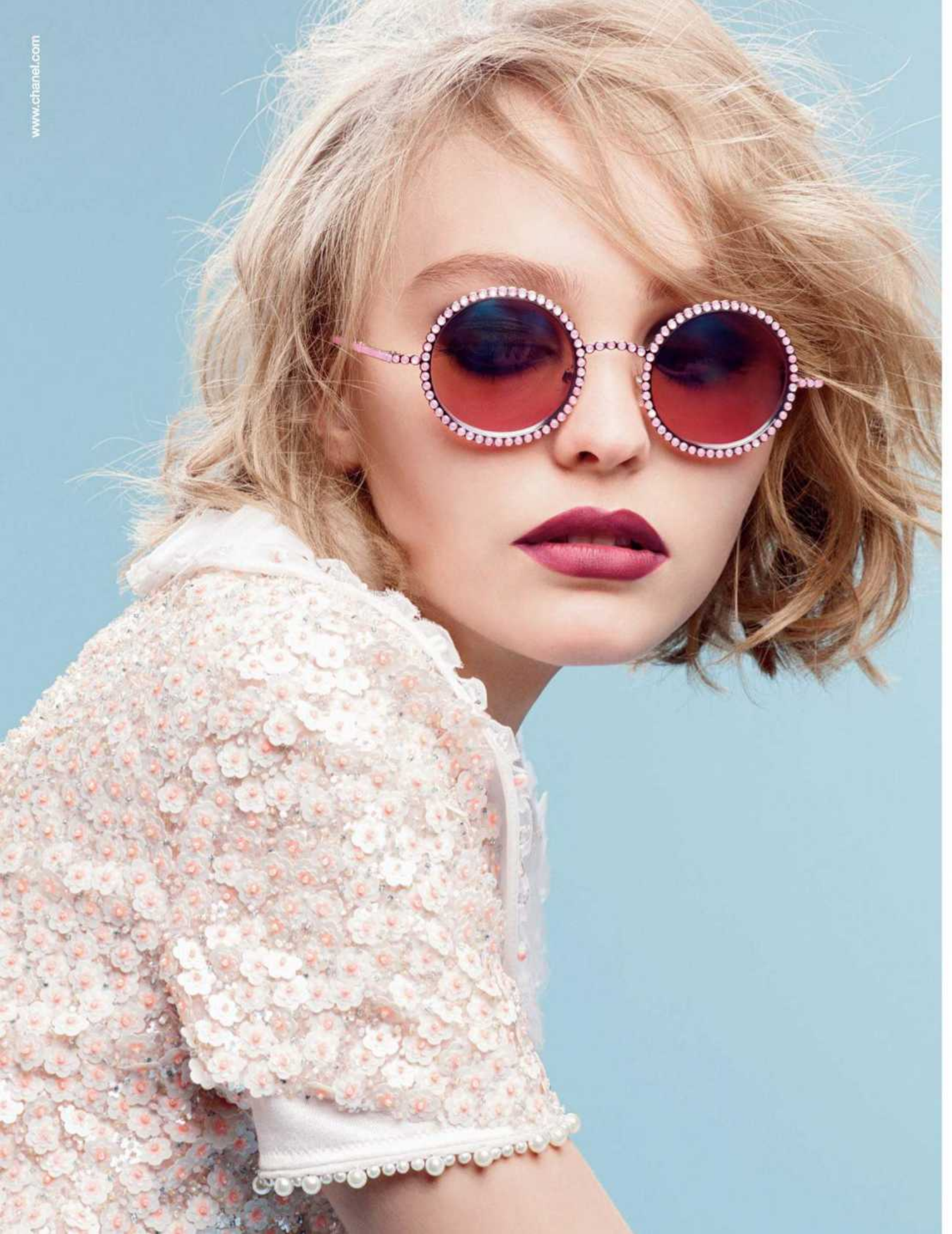
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Thompson Miami Beach

Photograph: Matthew Buck

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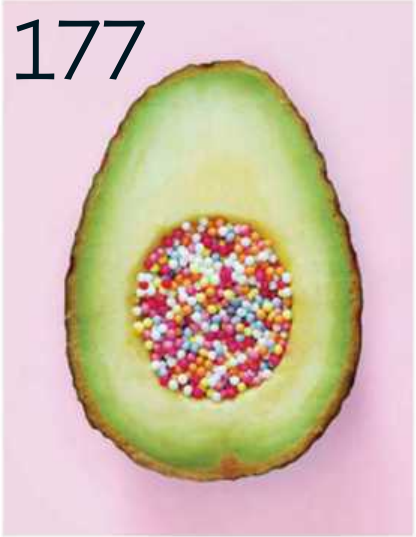
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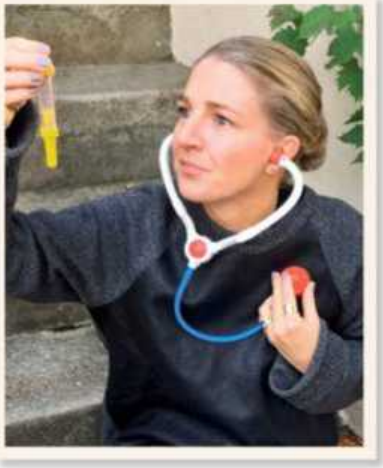


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EDITOR'S LETTER



I HAVE HAD A FEW tropical diseases over the years. An aggressive case of giardia in the Turks and Caicos that had me shaking so uncontrollably even I could see it was silly-funny while in the middle of it being really quite alarming. A peculiar case of something unknown in Java where the hospital gave me 15 types of antibiotics to take five times a day, which left me imprisoned in my hut doing nothing but concentrating on swallowing pills (they were all different, but all massive, like having to eat the various plastic boats from the game Battleship). And then some tummy bug in Thailand I made worse by eating a large quantity of Easter eggs my boyfriend had brought me from England. There I was, supposed to be looking meltingly attractive, brown as a berry, lithe as an otter, as we bicycled 10km to the beach in Phuket. Except half a kilometre in and I'm flat out on the side of the road, clutching my stomach, with some thrown-out old noodles and a rotting rambutan next to my face, and he has wheeled off to luxuriate in a vast pool of Coppertone without me. I tend not to bike any more. And I still find Cadbury Caramel eggs a bit of a challenge. (A challenge, yes, but not impossible.)

The fact remains I'm a terrible hypochondriac. I think I am ill at practically every turn. 'If I die in an accident in this car,' I once told my friend Tom, 'can you promise me you'll get a proper post-mortem done anyway, as I'm sure I'm also actually dying of something else as well.'

Not a single illness can be mentioned in front of me that I don't think I have. In the last month alone I have had – in my mind's eye – type 2 diabetes, a tumour in my stomach, early onset dementia and something called vestibular brain disease. This is how the conversation will go: someone else will say, 'And that's when they found out I had type 2 diabetes.' And then I'll say, 'Oh gosh, oh terrible, oh awful.' (With absolutely no thought for the other person at all, but with immediate concern for myself.) I will then pause… pause… pause, and bite my tongue for as long as I can before asking innocently, 'And what would the symptoms be for that?' And then they'll say, 'Fatigue, dizziness, heavy legs, drinking excessive amounts of water, confusion, exhaustion.' And in my head I'm going, 'TICK! TICK! TICK! TICK BLOODY TICK! I'VE GOT TYPE 2 DIABETES!'

My doctor is very kind. He takes some blood samples as I loll around forlornly on his burnt-butter-coloured leather sofa. Over the years he has amassed a lot of my blood. As I think about it now, pints of the stuff.

A few days later, my results are back. It turns out I don't have type 2 diabetes. I am sceptical, of course. I'm concerned they've got my blood sample mixed up with someone else's. 'Are you absolutely sure?' I ask my doctor, doing a little pretend chortle of frivolity. 'It's just those symptoms were such a match. Just such a… fit. It just seemed so… obvious.'

This is the new issue of *Condé Nast Traveller*. For those who are gallantly soldiering on even though they are blatantly suffering from some terrible malaise that is yet to be discovered by medical science.

Melinda Stevens
Editor

@MelindaStevens3 MelindaLP

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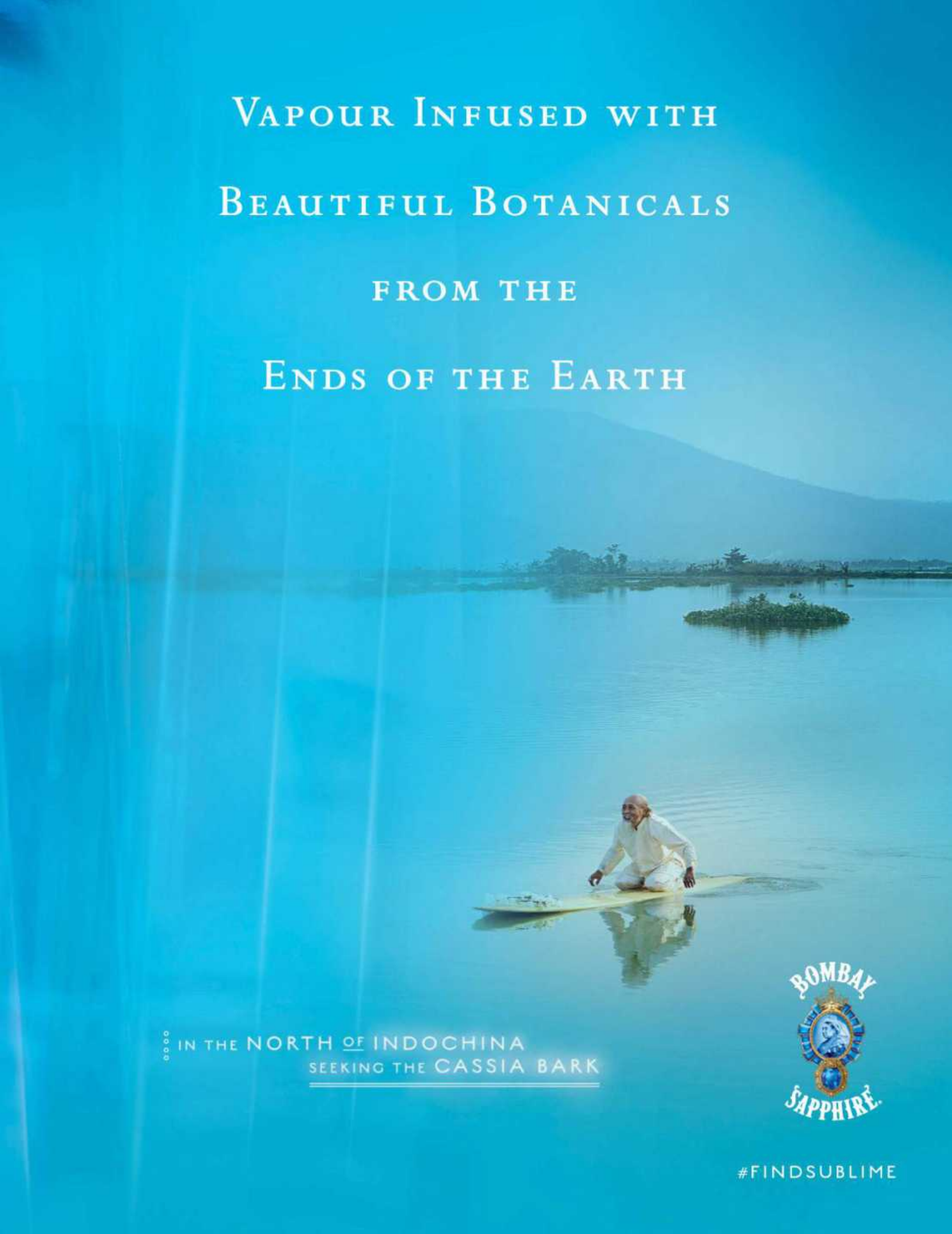
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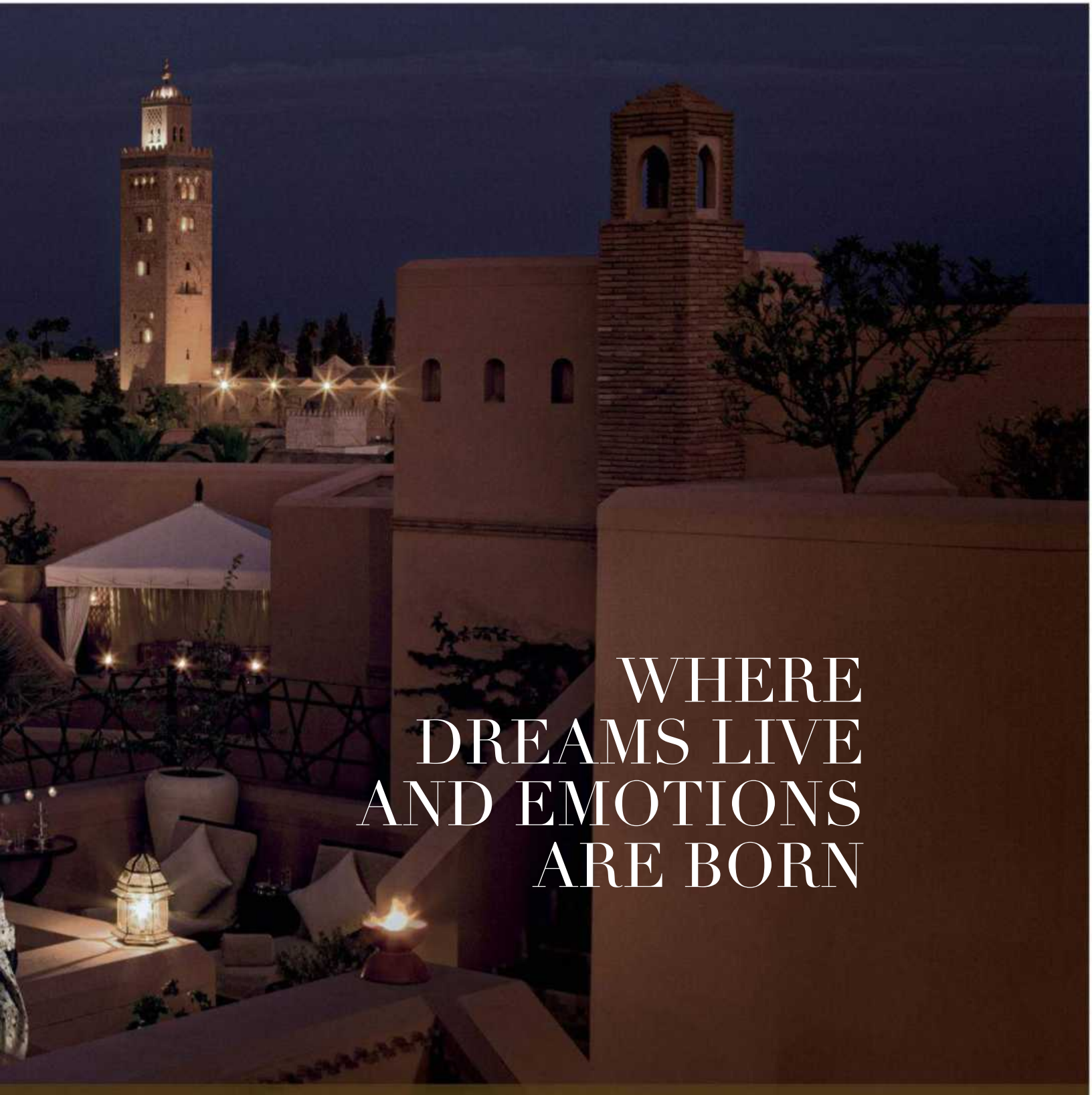
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This month we asked our writers and photographers to tell us where they go for winter sun




Max Anderson *Writer, Australia (p96)*

'When the temperature plunges I head to **Hackney Wick**. This unlikely proposition makes more sense than you realise because I live in the Adelaide Hills which suffer single-digit winters in July – time to fly north to the thoroughly reinvented East End.' *Max has written for The Sunday Times and The Guardian, and now for the Sydney Morning Herald*




Dima Hohlov *Photographer, Sweden fashion (p120)*

'There's a place called Ten103 Treehouse Bay on a beach on the island of **Koh Ta Kiev** in Cambodia. Electricity is scarce, but it's run by a chef who trained in Italy and a rock star who makes absinthe, so you really can't go wrong.' *Dima grew up in Latvia and lived in New York for 10 years but is now based in London*




Rita Platts *Photographer, Manchester (p170)*

'I always like to get away in January and this year I went to **Tasmania** where I found an Airbnb gem in Eaglehawk Neck. It's a quiet place with crystal-clear waters and an abundance of fresh seafood.' *Rita is a lifestyle photographer who recently shot for 'The Great British Bake Off' book*




Ondine Cohane *Contributor, Thailand (p130)*

'My winter hideaway is a small town called San Francisco (better known as **San Pancho**), an hour north of Puerto Vallarta in Mexico. It's an idyllic place, where I spend my days swimming, surfing and reading.' *Ondine recently became a Contributing Editor for Condé Nast Traveller*




Nicholas Griffin *Writer, Miami (p110)*

'**Staniel Cay** is a tiny port in the Bahamas with turquoise oceans free of people and filled with fish. You rise early, rent a boat and go snorkelling through Thunderball Grotto, floating past the swimming pigs and diving with the rays and the nurse sharks.' *Nicholas is based in Miami and is writing a history of the city. His book 'Ping Pong Diplomacy' is out now*




Emily Mathieson *Writer, Manchester (p170)*

'I love **Lanzarote**. It's a real unsung destination: sunny right through winter, plus it's cheap, cheerful, has great surfing and a fantastic wine scene that not a lot of people know about. Finca Malvasia is a tiny hotel on a volcanic vineyard with a Manrique-style pool.' *Previously a commissioning editor at Condé Nast Traveller, Emily is now a freelance writer*



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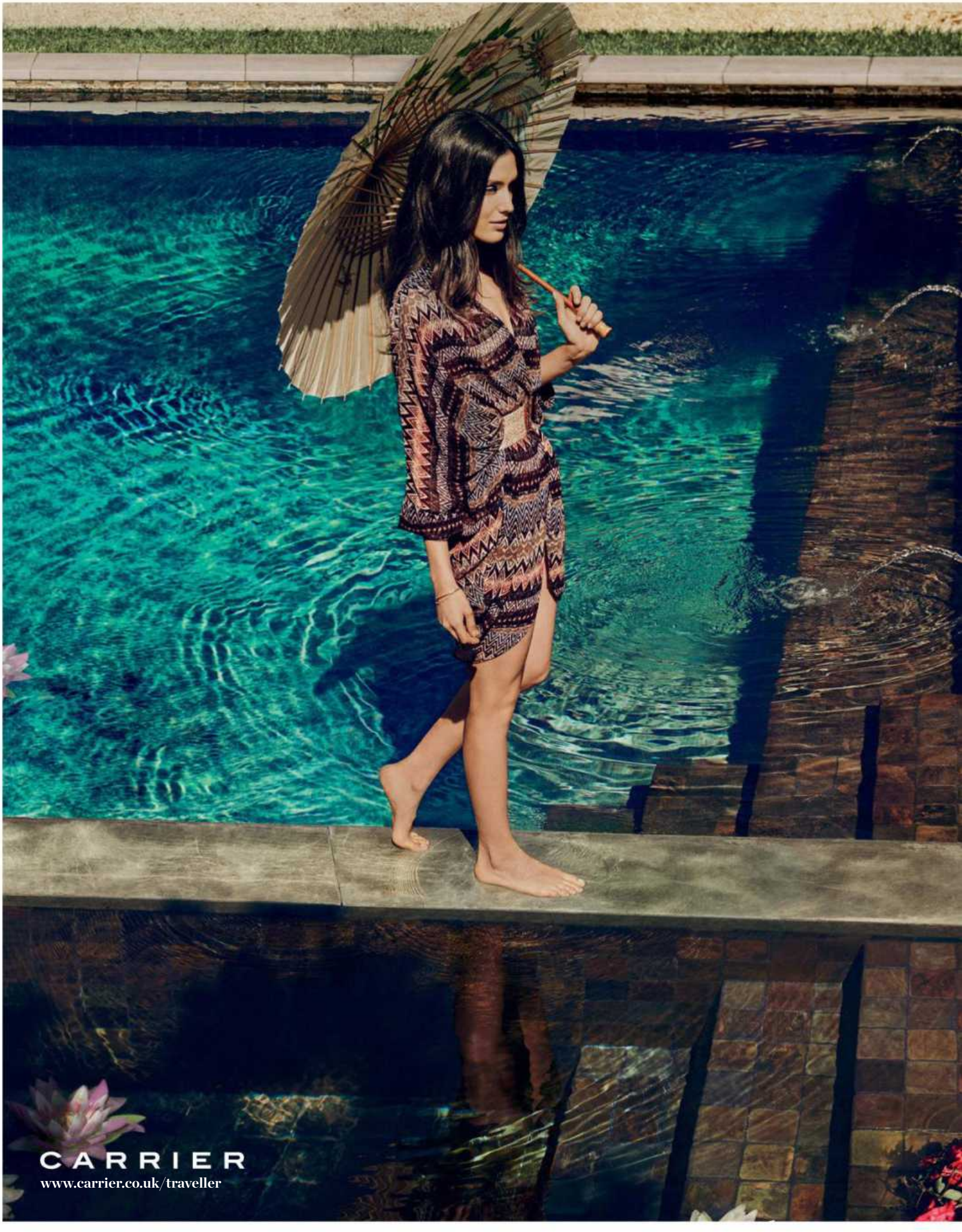
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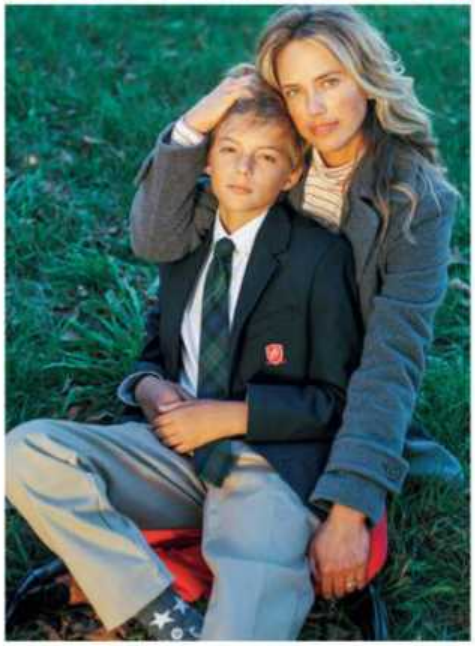

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FIRE STARTER

One of South America's true local heroes is giving his secret escape some added swagger

When the beach honeypot of Uruguay's José Ignacio reaches high-season fever pitch around now, it's into the woods the free spirits go, to the tiny town of Pueblo Garzón. What low-key action there is takes place around the main plaza, where dashing gauchos still tether horses to trees and the pace is as languid as the light is golden. At a store recently created by the Bodega Garzón vineyard, you can sip Syrah and buy local olive oil and coffee. And this month, Argentine chef Francis Mallmann re-opens Hotel Garzón. The five full-board rooms have been redesigned inside and out, adding private gardens with chimineas; Mallmann's signature wood-fire cooking – succulent flank steaks and *dulce de leche* pancakes – is now performed on eco-conscious stoves that burn less wood. There is also Casa Anna, a sensational villa available by the room or as a whole. Across the square the dusky pink La Esquina, owned by Helmut Newton's former agent, can be rented for the first time, through Brazilian Beach House. LAUREN HOLMES

PHOTOGRAPH: KARINA TENGBERG







Clockwise from bottom: Garrett McNamara's 2013 record-breaking surf in Portugal; Biarritz 1959; Waimea Bay, 1966; board designer Dick Brewer (centre)

HANG ON IN THERE

Surf dudes have always been ahead of the curve. Catch a ride through the centuries

Far-out, rad, epic. Language is not the only thing to have been shaped by surfing: its laidback lifestyle has long been the definition of cool. Once the preserve of Polynesian royalty, surfing first gained real momentum on the USA's west coast after World War II, where healthy, lithe, tanned bodies – and a rebellious nature – epitomised the new cult of youth. There are now more than 20 million surfers around the world, everywhere from Iran to Japan. But while artificial inland breaks and cold-water surfing trips are making new waves in the sport, its most enduring image is still grounded in the sunny beaches of southern California. Fashion, film, music, art: all aspects of today's popular culture have tapped into surfing's easygoing style – from Chanel-branded surfboards and the rise of neoprene on the catwalks to The Beach Boys' Cali-cool *Surfin' USA* vibe (it was, in fact, a marketing ploy as only drummer Dennis Wilson ever set foot on a surfboard). Travel trends, too, have been carved out by the swell-seekers. Pioneering surfers led the way for the masses when they created the buzzing beach scenes in places such as Byron Bay and Bali. Now, a glossy new book charts the sport's evolution and influence from 1778, when Captain James Cook first recorded the practice on the beaches of Hawaii, using rare images to create an unrivalled anthology. SAM BLEAKLEY '*Surfing' by Jim Heimann is out in January (Taschen, £135)*



ON A ROLL

Our favourite wave-chasing on-screen moments

THE ENDLESS SUMMER This seminal 1966 film practically invented surf travel, as it followed two Californian surfers around the world in search of new breaks.

POINT BREAK Playing up to the surfers-as-outsiders image, Kathryn Bigelow's 1991 classic pitted FBI agent Keanu Reeves against the most Zen bank robber ever, played by Patrick Swayze. Now there's an all-action remake from *The Fast and the Furious* cinematographer Ericson Core, out in January.

SURFER Guinness's 1999 advert only lasted 60 seconds but rode its way to the top of the best-commercial-of-all-time list – thanks to the rush of the huge Hawaiian swells chewing up all but one of the local surfers who starred in it.

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEORGE DAMBIER/BENRUBI GALLERY; DAVID DARLING; LEROY GRANNIS COLLECTION; TO MANE



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OTHER SIDE OF THE TRACKS

Once dismissed with 'bridge and tunnel' jibes as an industrial wasteland populated by Mafia families and trashy *Jersey Shore* characters, Jersey City is reinventing itself as a happening enclave just a seven-minute train-ride from the new One World Trade Center. No wonder New Yorkers are chugging across the river



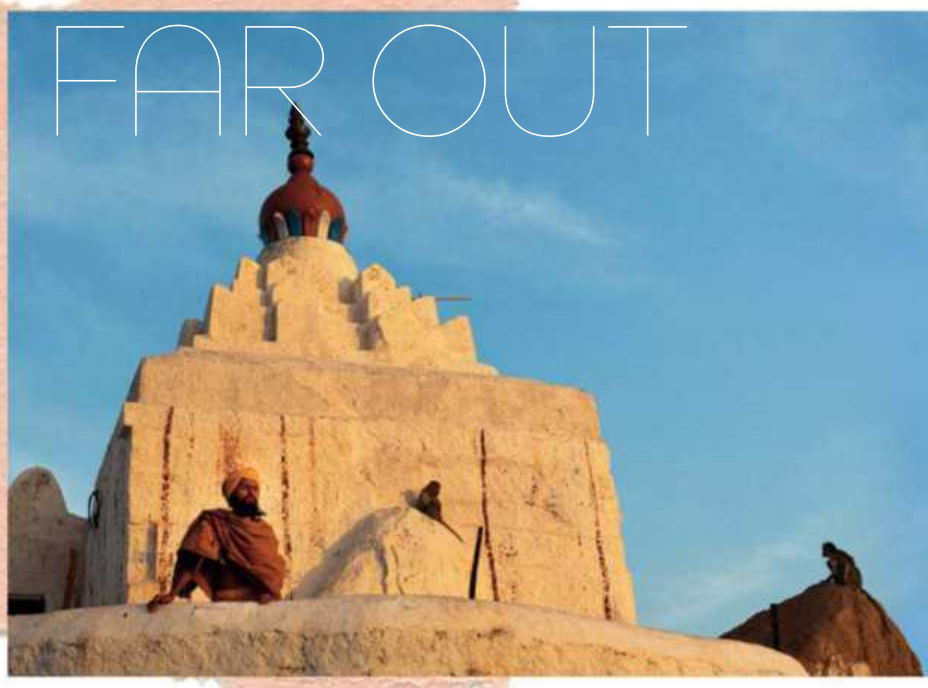
DRINK Igniting a perfect storm of booze and books, **Dullboy**, *above left*, has a snug, speakeasy vibe, with typewriters and book covers decorating the walls. The fanciful cocktails are named after female literary figures such as Holly Golightly and Lolita. **Barcade** is a late-night hangout where the tattooed crowd drink microbrews over classic tunes and old-school video games. And **LITM** is an all-white whiskey bar and gallery space.

EAT Stylishly industrial **Razza** dishes up the best pizza this side of the Hudson along with a sensational spread of antipasti made with local ingredients (black truffles, handmade mozzarella, Maine sea salt). But the latest arrival is **Talde** from *Top Chef* star Dale Talde, housed in a former police station. Its delicious Asian-meets-Italian-American creations (rigatoni with rapini pesto, edamame dumplings with lemon and chilli) bubble with originality.

SHOP Hipster lifestyle emporium **Kanibal & Co** is a curiosity shop stocked with vintage furniture, whimsical art and pretty jewellery. It also holds monthly craft classes (Japanese sashiko stitching; screenprinting cards) by local artists. **Another Man's Treasure** is a vintage showroom that attracts fashion folk and costume designers. It has sold pieces – everything from Alaïa dresses to army surplus – to the likes of Marc Jacobs and *Mad Men* stylists.

DO Catch a reading from authors including Irvine Welsh at the Brooklyn-transplant bookstore **Word,** which hosts a steady stream of live-music and literary happenings. **Curious Matter** is a quirky gallery in the parlour of an 1860s terraced house. Or walk down to the waterfront through the city's regenerating warehouse district to see views of lower Manhattan and the Battersea Power Station-like ruins of the **Powerhouse**. BRITT COLLINS

FAR OUT



At the height of its power in the 15th century, the ancient Indian city of Vijayanagara was among the largest and wealthiest on the planet. Today, it is a gorgeous ghost of its former self, with immense temple gates, austere colonnades and flamboyant palaces rising between the towering rock formations of the surrounding countryside. The village of Hampi sits within these ruins in the South Indian state of Karnataka, and has been a solid fixture on the hippie trail since the 1970s, renowned for its easy pace of life set by the lazy flow of the Tungabadhra River. There's little to rival an afternoon spent biking to the remote peripheries of the UNESCO World Heritage site and exploring this almost lunar landscape. Now, finally, there is somewhere equally spellbinding to stay. **Orange County, Hampi**, a new opening from this family-run hotel group, is designed in the style of a Vijayanagara palace, with 37 suites and nine pool villas, as well as an Ayurvedic spa – all just 4km from the old city. MICHAEL SNYDER

Doubles from about £420. www.orangecounty.in

PHOTOGRAPHS: JULIE HALL/IMAGEBRIEF; SHUTTERSTOCK

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Cut it too fine on the baggage drop? With this just-launched app (currently covering JFK, San Francisco and Boston) you can pre-order a takeaway, such as slow-roasted pork and heirloom tomato salad at Napa Farms Market – to take on board.

WAIT BETTER LoungeBuddy
You don't need to fly first class to kick back with a cocktail in an airport lounge. Enter your frequent-flyer number, premium credit cards and itinerary details, and LoungeBuddy lists all the lounges available for free or paid access.

BOARD BETTER GateGuru
With real-time flight status (no more cricking your neck to see the screens), hundreds of terminal maps and insider airport tips, this app will guide you from security, where you can even check your estimated waiting time, to gate.



SIT BETTER SeatGuru
Get the best seat in the sky with this ingenious download. It has more than 700 route-and-aircraft-specific seating charts for more than 100 airlines, each colour-coded (red – avoid; yellow – caution; green – grab), as well as user reviews and photos.

GEEK BETTER Flightradar24
Play air-traffic control with this plane-spotters' favourite. Click on one of the little yellow planes to see reams of data – speed, altitude, flight route, destination airport – and find out just how long the queue for the runway is.

ARRIVE BETTER JustLanded
A must for airport pick-ups (currently in the USA and Canada only), this app calculates exactly when to leave to collect someone from a flight, using live arrival times, GPS location and traffic conditions – then displays it as a handy countdown.

BLAZING SADDLES

Get that Lycra on, cycling just revved up a gear. Two-wheel tours through the Alps now seem like a spring breeze compared to the far-out thrills of these thigh-burning adventures



THE COLDEST
Want to leave tracks in Roald Amundsen's footsteps? This 18-day tour will take riders to the most southerly point on earth, in temperatures that drop to -40°C. Cycle on wide-tyred Fat Bikes over snowy, unforgiving and magical expanses of **Antarctica** to the last degree of longitude. *tdaglobalcycling.com*

THE WILDEST
Ring-tailed lemurs, the world's biggest and smallest cameleons, leaf-like geckos. Of around 200,000 species in **Madagascar**, some 150,000 of them are found nowhere else on earth. This 14-day hike-and-bike adventure will get up close to many of them, from the crater lakes of Andraikiba and Tritriva to the Ranomafana and I'Isalo National Parks. *www.spiceroads.com*

THE HIGHEST
Cyclist Kate Leeming has ridden the equivalent of twice around the equator. Join her on a top-of-the-world ride that includes the highest motorable road, 5,602m above sea level in **Ladakh**. *www.worldexpeditions.co.uk* KAREN BURSHSTEIN

PHOTOGRAPHS: PLAIN PICTURE/FSTOP; KEVIN MCHUGH/IMAGEBRIEF


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CHOP CHOP

Noma wonderchef René Redzepi has upped sticks to Sydney, where Antipodean ingredients are shaking up his kitchen alchemy



Fuelled by the success of his residency in Japan last year, and ahead of plans to close his famed Copenhagen original for good at the end of 2016, René Redzepi is preparing to bring his inimitable style (and all 130 staff) down under. Noma Australia will open in January for 10 weeks in the emerging Barangaroo district just behind Sydney's Darling Harbour. 'We're on the quay, 10 metres from the water – it's almost like being at Noma,' says Redzepi. Another attraction is the rich source of fun ingredients to play with. 'I've tried ants that taste of honey and weird fruits such as Gubbinge plums.' Seafood will be at the heart of the cooking. 'We're calling it a shoreline menu,' he says, 'but it all depends on the ingredients we get day-to-day.' Here he shares his discoveries from his recce tours around the country.

ADELAIDE AND AROUND

'I was very keen to visit Jock Zonfrillo's Orana restaurant in Adelaide as he's one of the leading specialists in all those native foodstuffs that I'd been travelling about trying to taste. The Adelaide Hills are stunning, too, with a community of natural winemakers – it's one of the best wine regions I've been to. I particularly liked Price of Silence, a Gamay from Ochota Barrels. All of our wine list will be from Australia.'

TASMANIA

'With its wind-struck landscape and colder climate, this region is more European. A real wow moment for me was tasting Tasmanian shellfish. We dived for urchins, scallops and oysters, which have their own specific terroir and flavour. The bailer clam, a huge orange sea snail, was extraordinary. In Hobart, we went to the restaurant Franklin and had a whole roast abalone from a wood-fired oven with fantastic bread. It sounds simple, but it was incredible – so good we went back three times.'

SYDNEY

'I love the coffee scene here: the quality is on the same level as Copenhagen but the actual culture of going to a café to sit outside and eat breakfast is better. My favourite is Edition Coffee Roasters in Darlinghust. After we open I'll be seeking out the Thai restaurants and occasionally splashing out on places such as Quay or Sepia. And I'm a fan of Neil Perry at Rockpool. He always delivers. He's got a new Chinese restaurant, Spice Temple, that I want to try.' *www.noma.dk/australia* EMILY MATHIESON

PHOTOGRAPH: TIM WALKER

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BASS CONTROL

Mexico's Riviera Maya is as in demand as the supermodels and superstar DJs that flock here. Now three new boltholes are switching up the beat



FOR DESIGN THRILLS

Hotel Tiki Tiki

While the fashion crowd's passion for hippie hangout Tulum means rising prices for beach-front pads, the emerging barrio of La Valeta, between Tulum town and the jungle, is cool but still affordable. It's the setting for this 15-bedroom Art Deco guesthouse, where Mexican architect-photographer Arturo Zavala Haag has got creative with vintage furniture, a small pool and his own-brand mezcal bar. *www.hoteltikitikitulum.com*

FOR ALL-NIGHT ACTION

Thompson Playa del Carmen

If the sunset strip in the palm-fringed town wasn't buzzy enough, this 92-room hotel has now brought the urban vibe of Thompson's other properties in New York and Miami, along with a 30,000 sq ft rooftop with infinity pool and dine-and-dance spot Catch. Five minutes away, its Beach House lays on yoga by the ocean-front pool and scuba-diving trips. *www.thompsonhotels.com*

FOR A NATURAL ESCAPE

KanXuk

Deep in the Sian Ka'an biosphere – a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to tropical birds, turtles, jaguars and puma – and edged by a reef, this tucked-away spot has four bungalows and five rooms set on the white sands of the Caribbean Sea, hammocks hung between lilting palms, indulgent service and delicious spa treatments. *www.kanxuk.com*

LAUREN HOLMES



THE TRENDS TAKING OFF AND THOSE RUNNING OUT OF FUEL

ARRIVALS

FOREST BATHING

Not literally a tub in the woods but the Japanese concept of *shinrin-yoku*; walking among the trees and being mindful of the sounds and scents. Try this latest wellness craze at Six Senses Douro Valley, Portugal or the Mayflower Grace, Connecticut.

MARS

Now that flowing salt water has been found there, could travel be on the distant horizon? Top architects think so, with the likes of Foster + Partners designing a liveable settlement for NASA's 3D Printed Habitat Challenge.

AIRLINES

Getting glossier with A-list endorsers: Nicole Kidman on Etihad, Jennifer Aniston on Emirates. But none can match Chanel Airlines, created for its S/S 16 show, with Kendall Jenner and Vanessa Paradis flying high.

DEPARTURES

UNDERGROUND SLEEPS

Hotel With in Stockholm, a new outpost from funky restaurant group Urban Deli, has 106 modishly monochrome bedrooms in a former garage… with no windows. No thanks.

SELFIES

Not just annoying but deadly too. This year 12 travellers have died trying to take snaps, for example, on the edge of an Indonesian crater, in front of a bull in Spain and hanging off the Taj Mahal.

CHECK-OUT TIME

Savvy hotels (the Peninsula Beverly Hills, the Capella group) have clocked the 24-hour trend. Your stay starts only when you arrive and the room is yours for a full day and night.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTOPHER VILLANO/IMAGEBRIEF.COM; JENNY ZARINS

PALAZZO ARNOLFINI



AN OASIS OF CALM WITHIN THE NOBLE CITY WALLS OF LUCCA

This is the ideal residence for travellers who enjoy being surrounded by history and art, with all the modern luxuries of contemporary life. They can enjoy the convenience and beauty of the town without compromising on the quietness and secluded comforts similar to those of a private villa.

Lisa Quaratesi Vincenzini's guests will be able to explore beyond the city's neat and fortified walls, towards the porticoes and loggias of the surrounding villas, and further deep into the Tuscan countryside.





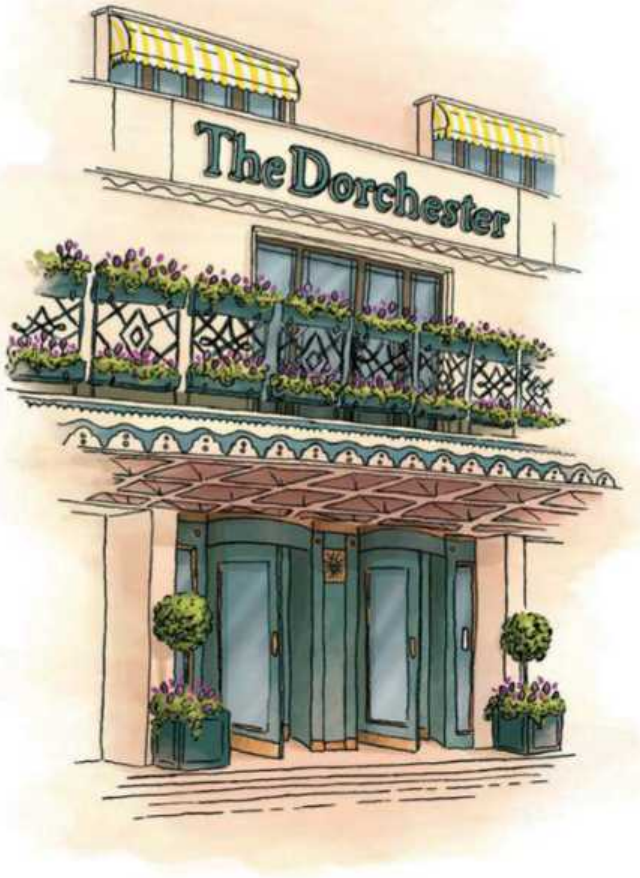




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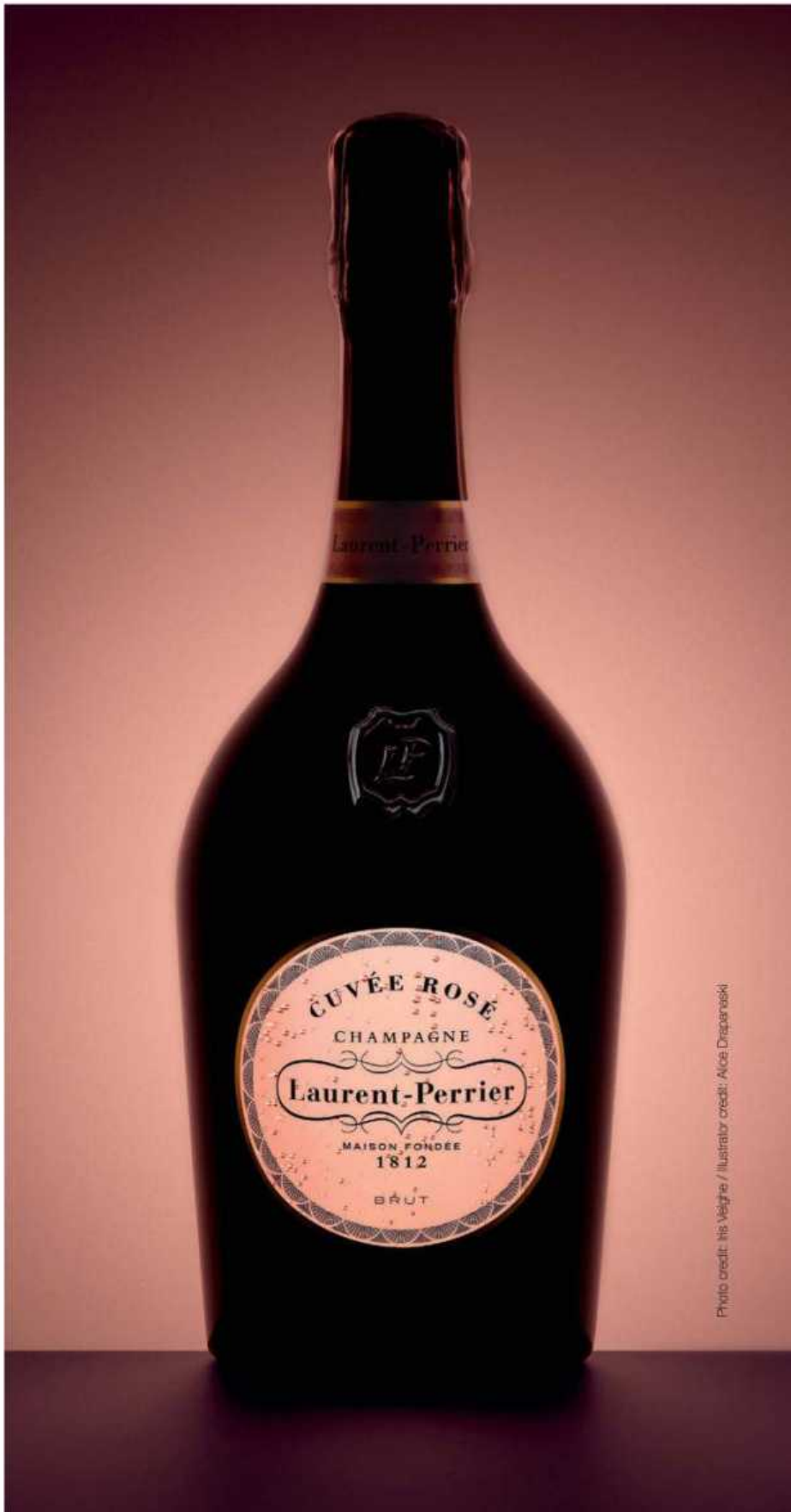


Photo credit: Iris Velghe / Illustrator credit: Alice Draperiski



SOMEWHERE FOR THE WEEKEND?

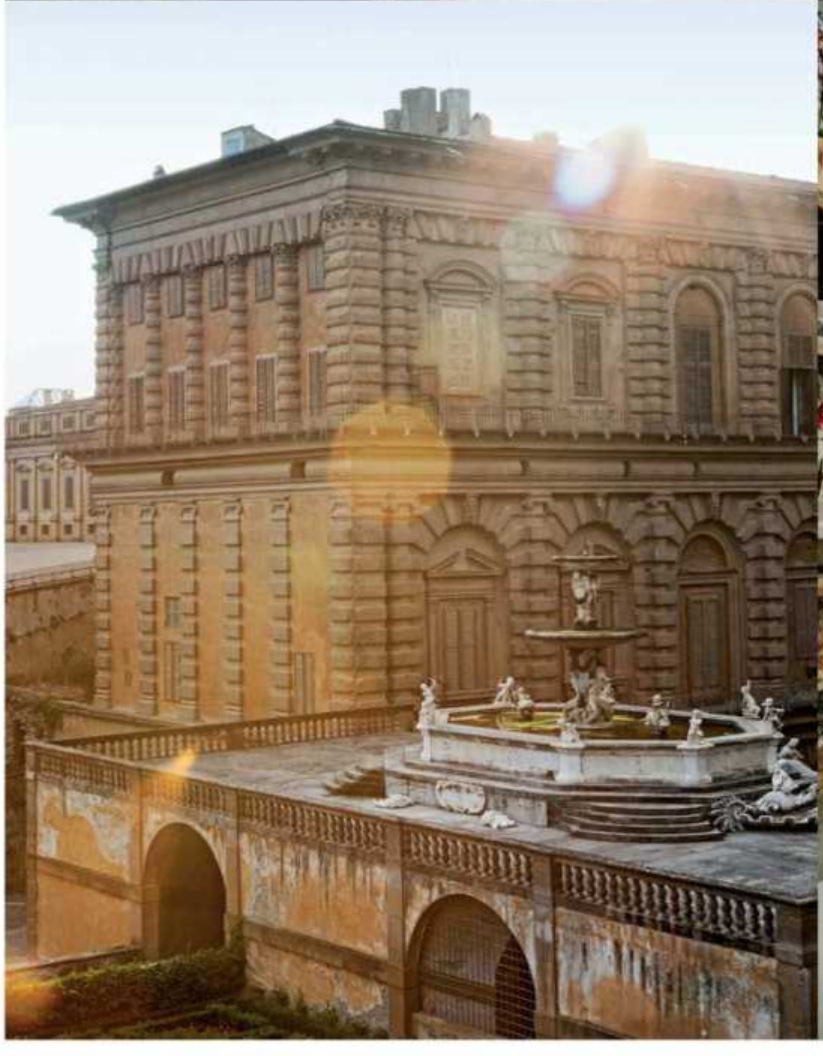
In Florence, even the graffiti is ancient. But now the city is getting into bed with iconoclastic art, edgy architecture and quirky twists on regional food

By Nicky Swallow

PHOTOGRAPH: **GIORGIO POSSENTI**











From left: Four Seasons Hotel Firenze; view from the hotel. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* SoprArno Suites; a statue on Ponte Santa Trinita; La Ménagère restaurant; Boboli Gardens amphitheatre. *Previous page*, SoprArno Suites

GONE ARE THE BELCHING BUSES AND BUZZING SCOOTERS. FLORENCE'S IMAGE AS A FUSTY LIVING MUSEUM IS BEING CHALLENGED

FLORENCE IS ON A BIT OF A ROLL. For a start, the city is gleaming from the ongoing clean-up ordered by former mayor Matteo Renzi (now Italy's youngest prime minister) that banned motorised traffic from much of the city centre, spruced up scruffy piazzas and filled in pot holes. Gone are the belching buses, bumper-to-bumper cars and incessant buzzing scooters, replaced by the sounds of cheerful voices and heels click-clacking on pavements. There's also a fresher, funkier vibe to the whole place that's challenging Florence's image as a fusty living museum.

Of course, the city's blockbuster sights attract millions of selfie-seeking visitors every year, so it's difficult to avoid the crowds (although it's quieter between November and February), but as a long-time resident, I've learnt to be a bit more selective and get my culture fix from the many off-the-radar treasures: Masaccio's seminal frescoes in the **Brancacci Chapel**, Ghirlandaio's exquisite *Last Supper* in the refectory of **Ognissanti** and the madcap haul of curiosities amassed for the **Museo Stibbert**, from splendid 16th-century Asian armour to snuff boxes and shoe buckles. Or I fast-forward a few hundred years to the collection of 20th-century art in the new **Museo del Novecento**, which is housed in the cloistered Spedale delle Leopoldine, with paintings and sculptures by Filippo de Piscis, Georgio de Chirico, Lucio Fontana and Marino Marini.

Elsewhere, **Palazzo Strozzi** (now under the directorship of Arturo Galansino, fresh from the Royal Academy of Arts in London) is brilliant for its creative exhibitions, such as *Divine Beauty from Van Gogh to Chagall and Fontana*, which runs until January 2016. The whitewashed vaulted cellars of **Strozzina** gallery has more challenging contemporary shows (in the past: Bill Viola, Francis Bacon and Gerhard Richter). For a complete break from fine art, check out **Museo Salvatore Ferragamo** and its fascinating collection of shoes made for A-listers, including Ava Gardner and Judy Garland, or head to **Museo Gucci** for the brand's customised 1979 Cadillac Seville and fabulous, red-carpet dresses (there's also a sleek café-restaurant and terrace with ringside views of Piazza della Signoria). Take the 10-minute, puff-inducing walk up to the newly renovated **Forte di Belvedere** to see why Kim Kardashian and Kanye West chose this rambling 16th-century defensive structure as the venue for their wedding; the views over Florence's celebrated red rooftops are magnificent, but I suspect the big draw were the formidable walls to keep the photographers out.

Opera plays an important part in the cultural life here, and now after endless delays and financial hiccups, the £175-million **Opera di Firenze**, designed by Paolo Desideri, has opened near Cascine Park. Even if you don't like opera, the architecture is spectacular: a soaring, asymmetrical cubic complex

PHOTOGRAPHS: HELEN CATHCART; GIORGIO POSSENTI; ROBERTA VALERIO



From left: retro design at Amblé furniture shop-cocktail bar; one of the rooms at JK Place hotel; a small bar on the way to Santo Spirito church

➤ that lords it over its neighbours, lights twinkling at night through gaps in the tiled cladding. Inside, the wood-panelled, 1,800-seater main theatre will host an impressive line-up of productions headlining the winter season: Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Florence's food scene is thriving, with the **Taste** festival pulling in 300 stalls and 15,000 visitors every March, the opening of Oscar Farinetti's emporium **Eataly** and last year's transformation of the first floor of the splendid 19th-century iron-and-glass **Mercato Centrale** into a sprawling marketplace. It showcases the region's best artisanal producers, selling freshly made mozzarella, pasta, cured meats, fried fish, ice cream and, at **Sud Pizzeria**, Romualdo Rizzuti's puffy Neapolitan pizzas, which are among the finest in town.

I often go to **Amblé**, a vintage interiors store-café hidden in a tiny *piazzetta* near Ponte Vecchio, which specialises in made-to-order *tramezzini* (triangular sandwiches). The unusual fillings at **Semel**, a tiny sandwich bar overlooking the Sant'Ambrogio market, are amazing (try the venison) as is the *panino con la mortadella* at pared-down deli **'Ino** near the Uffizi Gallery – a favourite with Renzi when he was mayor. For something a bit more sophisticated, try the lunchtime tapas at Michelin-starred **Ora d'Aria** next door. But the name on everybody's lips these days is **La Ménagère**, a multi-functional vaulted space near San Lorenzo market that combines a restaurant, tapas bar, flower shop and a home-accessories collection. Elsewhere, award-winning barista Francesco Sanapo brews some of the best coffee around at **Ditta Artigianale**, a bustling white-tiled and stripped-wood space that wouldn't look out of place in Brooklyn. There are more than 40 different gins on the menu too, making it one of the hottest aperitivo addresses.

Increasingly, savvy visitors are going across the river to the boho **Oltrarno** district where stylish eateries, independent shops and contemporary-art galleries are replacing traditional workshops. For an early-evening Negroni, join cool young things in the bars and restaurants around the lovely Piazza Santo Spirito. **Volume**, once the Bini brothers' wood-turning atelier, is a good choice and it's close to **Il Santo Bevitore**, which, after 13 years and despite the recent influx, is still everyone's favourite dinner spot, thanks to its buzzy atmosphere and simple menu (porcini mushroom soup, excellent steak tartare). Or feast on earthy, Florentine-inspired *taglierini* with cavolo nero and walnut pesto at rustic **Il Magazzino** on pretty Piazza della Passera (there's also a brilliant wine list with remarkably modest mark-ups). I was also recently impressed by up-and-coming chef Simone Cipriani's contemporary riff on regional food at **Il Santo Graal**, where dishes such as a sinfully rich chicken-liver pâté with grappa, and tortelli filled with spicy sausage and fresh ginger, are earning him a solid, local fan base.

> THE NEW OPERA HOUSE, WITH ITS SOARING CUBIC ARCHITECTURE, LORDS IT OVER ITS NEIGHBOURS

If you fancy some fish, head to relaxed former warehouse **Pescheria San Pietro** near the train station, which has a no-fuss menu of hopping-fresh fish and seafood (the sautéed clams and sizzling *fritto misto* are superb). Finally, there's **Bottega del Buon Caffé**, still glowing from its recent Michelin star and recent riverside relocation. It's now owned by two Danes, Claus and Jeanette Thottrup (of rural boutique beauty Borgo Santo Pietro), and you can expect accomplished modern Italian cooking from Antonello Sardi, a weighty wine list, a wine bar with squashy sofas and a terrace with Arno views.

For somewhere to stay, **SoprArno Suites** (doubles from about £110) in Oltrarno is a relaxed home-away-from-home with 11 gorgeous rooms, some with painted ceilings and free-standing baths, all with an intriguing collection of recycled, reclaimed and reconditioned furniture, lamps and objects. Its owners are opening a new hotel this month. A more edgy option, if you don't mind its suburban location, is super-cool **Riva Lofts** (doubles from about £125): local architect Claudio Nardi converted artisan workshops on the south bank of the Arno into 10 minimalist studios ➤

PHOTOGRAPHS: HELEN CATHCART; OLIVIA GORI





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From left: Il Palagio restaurant at Four Seasons Hotel Firenze; a street on the left bank of Arno river; a Superior Room at SoprArno Suites

➤ with a garden and lap pool. Back in the thick of things, the Ferragamo-owned **Portrait Firenze** (doubles from about £280), last year's most headline-grabbing opening, has Ponte Vecchio views and gadgets galore in its 37 dove-grey suites. There are more river vistas, and a Clarins spa just downstream at the palatial **St Regis** (doubles from about £225), where Valeria Piccini's Michelin-starred cooking at the rather formal Winter Garden By Caino is worth staying in for. Or you can nip across the piazza to the recently refreshed **The Westin Excelsior** (doubles from about £325) and its rooftop restaurant Sesto, where young Tuscan chef Matteo Lorenzini has just taken the helm. His dishes showcase regional, strictly seasonal ingredients with a hint of Asia thrown in. **Four Seasons Hotel Firenze** (doubles from about £235) may not be located right in the city centre, but the 11-acre gardens, huge pool, serious spa and Il Palagio restaurant more than make up for it.

For something more intimate, try **Al Palazzo del Marchese di Camugliano** (doubles from about £170). It was the former residence of the Marchesi Niccolini, who raided the family vaults to furnish rooms with fine antiques and paintings. Stylish **JK Place Firenze** (doubles from about £330) is still the fashion crowd's favourite with its immaculate Michele Bonan interiors, cocooning, club-like atmosphere and JK Lounge – a must on the cocktail circuit. The more affordable and newly opened **Garibaldi Blu** (doubles from about £95) shares the same views of Piazza Santa Maria Novella and has a spectacular vaulted sitting room. Its 22 smart rooms are done out in moody blues, greys and dusky pinks with Sixties-inspired custom-made furniture and hardwood floors.

This has been a big year for Florence: the city is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its short stint as capital of Italy. The headline news is the recent re-opening of the magnificent but underrated **Museo dell'Opera del Duomo** (it will be almost double the size). And then the Pope is coming to town any time now…

THE INSIDE TRACK



Top Florence addresses from shoe-designer Tommaso Melani, who also heads up the city's leather-making school

'I enjoy seeing any artisan at work, but some stand out for the sheer genius of their creations. **Alessandro Dari** is one: he makes jewellery in a totally innovative way, like an alchemist. Master perfumer **Lorenzo Villoresi** is another; if you're lucky to bag an appointment at his atelier, you will enter another world. I recommend the small **Bottega delle Antiche Terme** for exquisite made-to-measure shirts and **Grevi** for hats. At **Scuola del Cuoio**, you can buy beautiful leather goods and see experts working with a team of young people from all over the world.

I tell visiting friends to start the day at **Caffè Cibrèo** before a wander around the **Sant'Ambrogio** market. The church of **Orsanmichele** is interesting for its history (it was once a market and grain store) and for the statues commissioned by the Florentine guilds that stand in the niches. On a fine day **Boboli Gardens** is magical, especially the lower part where the locals go. For an aperitivo, try either the little bar tucked under **Piazzale Michelangelo** – the views are breathtaking – or **Rivalta** on the Arno, where you can sit on the river wall. **Zeb** is good for a quick lunch of homemade pasta and the owners are delightful. I eat at **Sostanza** at least 10 times a year and always order the same thing: artichoke *tortino*, sautéed chicken breast, *bistecca alla Fiorentina* and meringue cake. The place is timeless.'

Tommaso Melani is CEO of Stefano Bemer shoes and co-owns Scuola del Cuoio

PHOTOGRAPHS: **HELEN CATHCART; ROBERTA VALERIA**

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GREEN

Don't get jealous, but a riot of architects are taking the eco aesthetic literally

Top row, from left: a sink salvaged from a 1950s farm sits against a sea of handmade emerald tiles in Aēsop's **Berlin** boutique, and tethers the heritage-listed building to its previous life as a dairy store; the folding panel façade at The Forest House in **South Korea** reveals the street from the upstairs dining room; a deep marble bath in one of the Colonnade bedrooms at El Fenn in **Marrakech**; citrus sofas and cushions are designed by the Dutch firm Concrete at CitizenM's Cloud Bar Rooftop in **New York**; Paris studio Jouin Manku chose materials with natural tones and textures to give the lounge in **Munich**'s Bayerischer Hof hotel the feel of a forest landscape.

Middle row, from left: all-green apartments by Whotells in **Barcelona** are kitted out with Muji furniture; the peppermint paintwork and zingy chartreuse upholstery for the new Pasticceria Marchesi pastry shop in **Milan** were designed by Italian fashion house Prada; the bar area and counter tops at FineFood Kärlek och Mat in **Stockholm** are clad in Guatemalan marble; at the Hotel Zaandam in **the Netherlands**, WAM Architecten have designed an 11-storey building that looks like a pile of traditional houses; a bag of popcorn and a homemade doll are left in rooms at the Drake Devonshire in **Prince Edward County, Canada**.

Bottom row, from left: each room has its own colour scheme designed by owners Stefan & Steven at Stout & Co B&B, a former brewery in **Amsterdam**; in the desert, Dar Hi in **Tunisia** has views of the oasis town Nefta; Watson Bay hotel in **Sydney** serves up lobster rolls and crab sliders from the minty Beach Club bar; the Raval apartments by Whotells are just a two-minute walk from Las Ramblas; coffee shop Greenheart Espresso in **Sydney** was named after the aquamarine wash splashed over the walls. TABITHA JOYCE

PHOTOGRAPHS: **SAM ALI; PETER BARNES; NIKOLAS KOENIG; MAARTEN NOORDIJK; BERNARD TOUILLON; JOANNA VESTEY**



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WHERE TO STAY

Cambodia Cornwall **London** Molly Ringwald's favourite hotels

EDITED BY **PETER BROWNE**



EXCLUSIVE FIRST REVIEW

RISE AND SHRINE

Crowds zoom in and out to see the temples of Angkor, Cambodia's busiest attraction, but few people hang around for long. Now there's finally a smart retreat with real staying power. Michelle Jana Chan hails its arrival



WHEN I VISITED CAMBODIA 20 years ago, Siem Reap was a potholed backwater town teetering on the edge. There had been decades of fighting – internally with the Khmer Rouge, then with Vietnam – as well as political plots and coups. Millions had died. The living were weary. I was a young reporter for *Newsweek* magazine and Cambodia offered up a story with a bit of grit. Pol Pot was still hiding out in the jungle and some members of the Khmer Rouge were active. The UN was trying to mediate elections and keep the peace. There seemed to be more of their white four-wheel-drives than local tuk-tuks.

In spite of the instability, there was already a trickle of tourists. Siem Reap is the gateway to Angkor, hundreds of Khmer temples dating from the ninth to 15th centuries, which had recently been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Signs instructed visitors to stick to the path. It was a serious warning: they hadn't yet cleared the area of landmines planted over the years by various sides.

Yet Siem Reap was a perfect pause on an Indochinese tour, a slice of old Asia where everybody woke at dawn to go to the market, loitered throughout the day, and turned in early because there was little else to do. After sunset, the town was enveloped in darkness. I recall the hum of the few generators and a lone light bulb dangling above a hawker stall where I'd eat a bowl of *nom banh chok* noodles. When I returned to my backpacker guesthouse, I'd be splashing through puddles in the pitch black.

Since then, the town has boomed and is past recognition, except for the potholes. But I still adore Siem Reap: the lovely locals who know of darker days; the crazy traffic; kitsch souvenirs; little hidden bars, and cheeky shops that can upload an iPad with a thousand songs for a few dollars. It's fun and noisy, but, of course, all that busyness can get to you, so it's good to have a secret retreat.

Phum Baitang sits in eight acres of lush vegetation just outside town, a collection of stilted huts built with thatch, rattan and clay tiles, which closely resemble the homes of rice farmers. The gardens are designed to look like paddy fields but are planted with aromatic lemongrass instead of rice, which only looks attractive for a few months of the year. The fields are studded with the tall, slender sugar palms that are so distinctive of the Angkor landscape. There is talk of buying a water buffalo to plod around the hotel grounds.

I might be in the heart of Cambodia's hinterland if it wasn't for the fact that I can lounge on a day-bed beside a private plunge pool and pad about on my terrace in the shade of a frangipani tree while sipping a fresh-lime soda.

Phum Baitang (it translates as green village) is the second hotel from French



SIEM REAP IS ALL ABOUT THE CRAZY TRAFFIC, LITTLE HIDDEN BARS AND KITSCH SOUVENIRS, AND THE LOVELY LOCALS WHO KNOW OF DARKER DAYS

fashion entrepreneur Roger Zannier, who holds the licences for Kenzo Kids and Junior Gaultier, among other labels. He is a strong supporter of Cambodia and finances two orphanages in Phnom Penh. His son, Arnaud, who's in charge of the company's new hotel division, says they want to build properties with a strong local feel that echoes their immediate environment.

Phum Baitang has 45 rooms, which are simple but supremely tasteful, as you might expect from a French family in designer children's wear. Each one is dressed in cool cottons and linen with elegant, handmade wooden furniture, rough stone sinks and bathtubs, antique carved headboards, a few pottery jars and lantern-style lighting.

There are two restaurants – one beside a sensational 50-metre infinity pool – and two bars, one in the original 100-year-old farmhouse, which looks like a scene from a Somerset Maugham novel, with rattan wing chairs, pie-crust tables and oriental carpets. On the menu are Khmer curries and fish *amok* with lemongrass, turmeric and galangal, as well as Thai *tom yum* soup and fresh Vietnamese spring rolls (Cambodia's neighbours have hands-down better food). The wine list includes Roger Zannier's own vintages from his estates in the South of France and Portugal's Douro Valley.

The staggeringly beautiful spa is a tribute to Angkor's temples, carved by stonemasons and run by a delightfully camp Filipino named Mariano Jr. Organic coconut milk and local moringa oil – 'the most expensive oil in the world,' he says – are used in the treatments. It is all a perfect antidote to the hustle of Siem Reap, and a respite from the two million visitors who come to Angkor each year.

The challenge will be to maintain the calm. When Zannier started building, the site was well outside town. Now it is among new villas and down the road from a Nick Faldo-designed golf course. 'We'll probably end up in the middle of Siem Reap,' sighs Arnaud. Perhaps, but for some time yet it will be a place of repose, seemingly set apart yet quintessentially Khmer.

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BED-HOPPING WITH MOLLY RINGWALD

The novelist, jazz musician and star of *Pretty in Pink* and *The Breakfast Club* talks to **Francesca Babb**



DRAKE HOTEL, TORONTO
'This place is fun, with a brilliant restaurant and amazing cocktails. It's on Queen Street West, which is a very cool spot with good shops. It's also near Ossington Avenue, where all the best restaurants are.' *www.thedrakehotel.ca. Doubles from about £110*



THE DORCHESTER, LONDON
'I've done Graham Norton's TV show twice and this is where they put you up, which is really nice. It's just so luxurious I find it very easy to relax here. My judge of what makes a great hotel is a great bathtub and The Dorchester wins outright on that score.' *www.dorchestercollection.com. Doubles from £415*

'MY JUDGE OF WHAT MAKES A GREAT HOTEL IS ITS BATHTUB'





THE ST REGIS NEW YORK
'This hotel is so fancy! It's not at all the way I live, but it's really fun to dip into that world. I had a butler with my room, so I invited my friends over and we had a big dinner party.' *www.stregisnewyork.com. Doubles from about £600*



PUNTA TRAGARA, CAPRI
'The views from the bedrooms here are incredibly beautiful. I got married on the Amalfi Coast and went to Capri on my honeymoon. It's one of my favourite parts of the world, although I don't know any Italian, apart from *grazie*. I learnt French as an adult and I think I maxed out on languages there.' *www.hoteltragara.com. Doubles from about £330*

HOTEL LOUIS 2, PARIS
'I first stayed here with a girlfriend when I was 16, and it still looks exactly the same. We would go and get strawberries, Nutella and baguettes and take everything back to the hotel and have a picnic in the room. When I lived in Paris years later, I made my family who came to visit stay here too. My daughter is six and a complete Francophile, so I've promised her we'll go if she learns some French first.' *www.hotel-louis2.com. Doubles from about £185*

Molly Ringwald stars in 'Jem and the Holograms', which will be released in early 2016



PHOTOGRAPH: **PATRICK FRASER/CORBIS OUTLINE**



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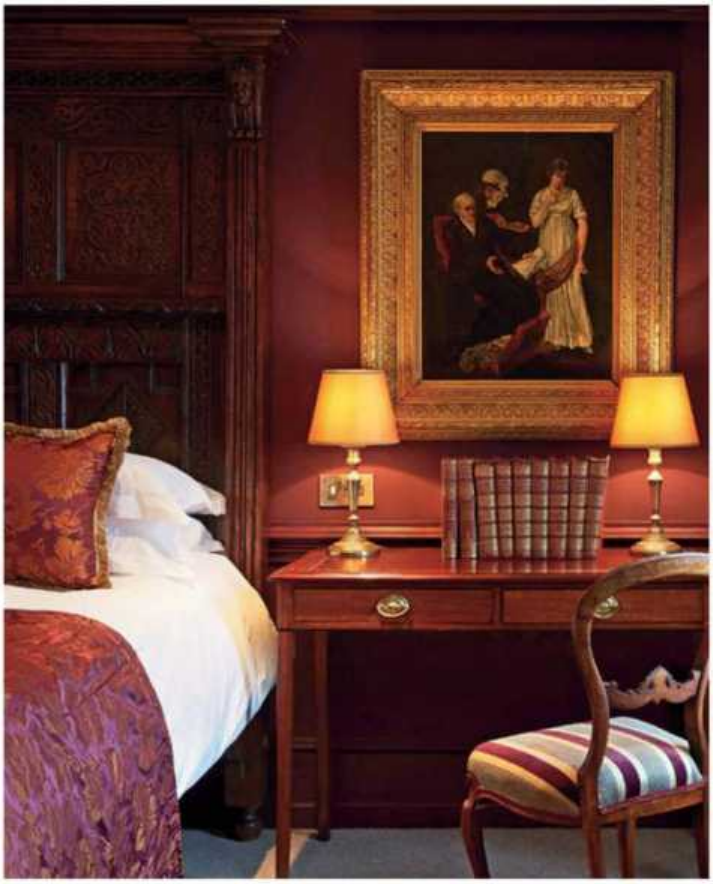
SPACE MAKER

URBAN VILLA, BRENTFORD

UNDER £150

West London's Brentford may be best known for its football club (and easy-peasy access to Heathrow), but this new high-rise hotel is a box-fresh spot from which to explore the tree-lined streets and shops of Chiswick and the meandering paths of Kew Gardens. Manhattan-based designers Grzywinski + Pons have turned the somewhat unorthodox location into a plus by ensuring all 100 bedrooms, at the top of the high-rise, have superb views of Richmond or the City (on a clear day); the vibe is smart but cool with tan leather-covered headboards, wall-mounted Anglepoise lamps and locker-style open wardrobes. Downstairs in the bar and lobby there are brushed concrete walls and suspended ceiling rafts made from granulated cork, a living wall and solid oak floors. Independent coffee shop BOKI serves delicious pastries and smoothies for breakfast (The Hulk is as big and green as it sounds) and organic ham frittatas for lunch. And as most rooms are the size of a one-bedroom flat and have proper kitchens, you really could move in and never leave.

Neighbourhood watch: Head to nearby Ealing Park Tavern for Shetland Isles mussels and pot-roasted partridge. Hop on a hotel bike and zip over to Kew; raid Angie's Little Food Shop on Chiswick High Road for coffee and cake; have a Mojito at High Road House. TABITHA JOYCE *+44 20 3750 5000; www.urbanvilla.com. Studio villas from £139*



PERIOD DRAMA

BATTY LANGLEY'S, SPITALFIELDS

Try not to get jostled by the worker bees in suits heading purposefully up Bishopsgate and hang a right onto Folgate, a dreamy Dickensian gem of a cobbled street. There's a small sign hanging above the door of this red-brick Georgian townhouse, but it's so discreet most people walk straight past, poor fools. Inside is a welcoming, go-slow refuge from the speedy goings on outside. The creation of Peter McKay and Douglas Blain, the guys behind The Rookery in Clerkenwell and Soho's Hazlitt's, this one has all the grandeur of a private gentleman's club with none of the pomp. It's cosy and cosseting with a library and two ground-floor sitting rooms (one, the lovely Tapestry Room, has an honesty bar). A confession-box-like lift whizzes up to the 29 bedrooms, crammed with 18th-century paintings, four-poster beds and huge claw-foot bathtubs. Techie details such as Apple TVs are hidden from view, showers have side jets so you can keep hair dry and one room even has a concealed bathroom accessed by the pull of a specific book. There's no restaurant but breakfast (fresh fruit, granola, smoked-salmon bagels, bacon baguettes) is delivered to your room.
Neighbourhood watch: Head over to Spitalfields Market for vintage clothes and antiques, then to brasserie Blixen for a Bellini; feast on Portuguese tapas at Taberna do Mercado (house-tinned fish; pig's trotters and cuttlefish broth), then wind down with a nightcap at The Water Poet right opposite the hotel. ROXY MIRSHAHI *+44 20 7377 4390; www.battylangleys.com. Doubles from £330*

CENTRAL CASTING

THE HOSPITAL CLUB, COVENT GARDEN

All that brainstorming must be tiring. More than a decade after Paul Allen and Dave Stewart opened this switched-on media hangout, 15 bedrooms have been added to the mix, open to all. They range from den-like, windowless 'sleepers' for those needing a lie-in (breakfast is served until noon) to suites with their own terraces for chim-chim-cheree views. Designer Russell Sage has laid on lots of natural wood and a few *Boogie Nights* riffs, with poptastic furniture and a rippling, harlequin-coloured carpet. Each room showcases a different artist – room 2, for example, has Rick Guest portraits of taut Royal Ballet dancers, who clearly don't overindulge as much as many here. Crack Baby shots (vodka, passion-fruit, Chambord, Champagne) are fired out in the top-floor bar; the restaurant delivers deft gastropubby favourites (ham hock, shepherd's pie). The club has a busier social life than most hotels, with silent discos, gigs, talks and screenings. Just make sure you're back in your room for the 7pm cocktail trolley.
Neighbourhood watch: Go to American Classics for cult denim, the Film Museum for Bond car chases and Café Murano for Italian deliciousness. RICK JORDAN *+44 20 7170 9100; www.thehospitalclub.com. Doubles from £180*





CLASSY TRAILBLAZER

TOWN HALL HOTEL, BETHNAL GREEN

Carved into the beautiful bones of an Edwardian civic building, this handsome upstart led the way for other neighbourhood hotels when it opened five years ago. Its Michelin-starred restaurant by Nuno Mendes lured foodies further east than many had ever ventured before. Now there's a renewed buzz in the Bethnal Green air with young-gun chef (and Tom Aikens protégé) Lee Westcott doing exciting things with grouse and roe deer in the hotel's Typing Room. The building is blessed with gorgeous Art Deco details (marble floors, curved staircases), like the setting for a slick period drama starring Colin Firth (it has in fact appeared in both *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Poirot*). The big, high-ceilinged bedrooms are smart but edgy, with funky Italian light fittings and all-white bathrooms encased in glass cubes (curtains can be drawn to preserve modesty). At the Peg + Patriot bar downstairs incredibly lovely staff serve potent drinks with punny names (the Malty Python is made with maltesers, vermouth and manzanilla). And after a couple of those, you almost start to believe you're the star of your own TV thriller.

Neighbourhood watch: Nearby Paradise Garage is the latest Bethnal Green restaurant getting the critics all aflutter (go for the charred Cornish sardine, venison tartare or rabbit for the whole table). Broadway Market, the unofficial catwalk of East London, is also a stroll away and a fun spot for street food on Saturdays; right next door is the charming V&A Museum of Childhood, a little brother to the grander Kensington landmark. GRAINNE McBRIDE

+44 20 7871 0460; www.townhallhotel.com. Doubles from £169

BED & BOOZER

THE TOMMYFIELD, KENNINGTON

UNDER £150

This is a handsome Victorian pub done out in hipster-historic style (cream metro tiles and copper fittings) by the Three Cheers Pub Co, which operates seven bars in South London. Six snug bedrooms were added here last summer, each with unapologetically big bathrooms, some with claw-foot tubs. The look is funky townhouse: white-painted exposed brick, petrol-blue wainscoting, wool-covered headboards and bold graphic screen prints. In-room fridges are stocked with pots of porridge, fruit, orange juice and fresh milk for coffee and the pub serves brilliant brunch classics on weekends (Severn & Wye smoked salmon and scrambled eggs; buttermilk pancakes with blueberry compote). Overnighters get a half-price deal on lunch or supper, and on a Sunday evening the pub hums with happy couples feasting on seared scallops and grilled lamb chops and gangs of friends sharing boards of British charcuterie or tucking into a wild boar or venison pie from the blackboard menu.

Neighbourhood watch: Just a smidgen south of Waterloo and the South Bank, Kennington is surprisingly central (10 minutes on a Boris bike to the Tate Britain, 15 to Covent Garden). Or stay local: play pétanque in Georgian Cleaver Square; pack a picnic and cheer the wickets at The Kia Oval; cruise Damien Hirst's Newport Street Gallery in Vauxhall; go for a fair-trade brew at indie coffee shop The Kennington; browse industrial-chic Brunswick House on Wandsworth Road. FIONA KERR

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THE WEEKENDER

CHAPEL HOUSE PENZANCE, CORNWALL

WHY STAY? It's the smartest, most elegant place in Penzance, a town once considered St Ives' scruffy neighbour but fast coming into its own.

WHY NOW? For off-season blustery walks along the coast.

WHAT IS IT? A significant red-brick-and-stone Georgian house at the bottom of Chapel Street, close to the harbour wall. Listen to the sound of seagulls; suck up that sea-salty air. Built in the 1790s, it was once home to the Carne family of Cornish bankers (check out the old safe in Room 2). Until 2011 it served as the Penzance Arts Club with just five basic bedrooms and shared loos.

BEHIND THE SCENES Susan Stuart, a former charity chief executive, adopted the house as a project after spotting it for sale while on holiday here. It was in a grim state, with plastic shower cubicles and blocked-up windows, but Stuart took it all on board. The result is pleasingly pared back: white-on-white with painted floorboards and shutters, and delightful original details such as a delicate, hand-carved flower motif on the marble fireplace in one of the two majestically proportioned reception rooms. Polished mahogany antiques, a baby grand, contemporary sofas and warm, abstract-design rugs transform these imposing, high-ceilinged spaces into cosy hangouts.

SLEEP There are six bedrooms upstairs. The three on the first floor are more traditional; those on the top-floor are more modern with a glass-and-steel dormer window through which to watch the clouds. All have bespoke oak beds – Stuart is a great champion of Cornish craftsmen and companies – and bathrooms tailored to the different spaces. And each has an iPad preloaded with local recommendations.

EAT It's basically a B&B, but Stuart holds kitchen suppers on Friday and Saturday nights when she cooks for guests (and anyone else who cares to book) in the basement kitchen/dining room. Breakfast is a feast of thin-sliced fruit and juices (the celery, apple and purple carrot may look like green sludge but is absolutely delicious); the bacon, eggs and sausages for the Full English are all farm-fresh and locally sourced. Supper was fantastic too: plaice ceviche, followed by John Dory fillet with a tomato and cardamom compote, a heavenly summer pudding and Cornish cheeses. There's a decent wine list, and a superb selection of single-malt whiskies should you be so inclined.

WHO COMES HERE On this occasion: a couple of French-Canadians travelling around Cornwall on public transport; the CEO of a national transport company and his grown-up family; and a loved-up young couple on a weekend break.

WE LIKE Stuart's personal art collection, and the fact that students from the nearby Newlyn School of Art show work in the entrance hall (it's all for sale).

WE DON'T LIKE There's no parking.

+44 7810 020617; www.chapelhouse.co.uk. Doubles from £150 PAULA ELLIS



OUT AND ABOUT

The lovely **Penlee House Gallery & Museum** has a great collection of Cornish art, and there are terrific contemporary shows at **The Exchange**. For natural beauty products, head to **Pure Nuff Stuff**. **No.56** sells gorgeous, Scandi-inspired objects (I bought a wooden-acorn light pull); **Kitt's Corner**, *above*, is rammed with mid-century-modern furniture and lighting. To blow away the cobwebs, walk along the seafront to the fishing village of **Newlyn**.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANYA RICE

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HIGH NOON

An extraordinary man has opened up his extraordinary home in the New Mexican desert for people to rent. Places like this are usually impossible to access, but this Wild West crashpad is a barn-storming pioneer

By **Lisa Grainger**. Photographs by **David Crookes**





The Birchwood Suite at Rancho Alegre, Santa Fe. *Opposite*, a view from Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument













There is only one thing that's certain about Jochen Zeitz, and it's that no one knows what he'll do next. The 52-year-old German is as unpredictable as a box of frogs, and as multifaceted as a hall of mirrors. Call him a businessman and he'll turn conservationist, then rancher, then art patron. He is a former CEO who transformed Puma from a loss-making sportswear company to a cool £1 billion brand. An environmentalist who challenges companies on their sustainability. A marathon runner. A pilot who owns the original yellow 1929 Gypsy Moth biplane used in *Out of Africa*. An author whose book, *The Manager and the Monk*, 'a conversation on responsible business' written with a Benedictine monk, has been translated into 15 languages. An honorary warden of Kenya. Oh, and a linguist who speaks six languages, including Swahili.

What he's not, I discover on arrival at his new ranch in New Mexico, is vain or a fashionista (in spite of being on the board of Kering, owner of Alexander McQueen and Gucci, among others). Surrounded by barking dogs, he looks like a scruffy itinerant cowhand: baggy khaki shorts and crumpled shirt hanging on his whippet-thin runner's frame, his straggly hair as dusty as his plimsolls. He's just driven his Ford pick-up back from nearby Madrid, an arty, tumbleweed town inhabited by long-haired cowboys and shaggy-bearded bikers, and he appears every bit the local. 'Fancy meeting the bison?' he suggests. 'You don't see those every day…'

Although his five prehistoric-looking bison with their heavy eyelids, mincing little bottoms and oversized fluffy heads are extraordinary and rare, his home is the real sight to behold. As his neighbour Thomas Wingate puts it: 'I've lived in the Hollywood Hills, New York, and known some pretty wealthy people – but this, I reckon, has to be the classiest house in America.'

On the top of a gently sloping hill, with views over 177 acres of dry, rocky scrubland, the 11-bedroom property is a cross between a Spanish hacienda, a Mexican pueblo, a modern Western theatre set and an interior designer's fantasy, with brown mud-brick walls, creamy polished plaster and soaring wood and stone ceilings, embellished with antique and contemporary treasures. Lying low beneath cornflower-blue skies and backed by the Ortiz mountains, it looks as if it's been here for centuries, although it hasn't; it was built 16 years ago by William F Tull, a leading architect of the adobe style.

Zeitz came across the house because it contained replicas of clothing worn by 12 historically important Plains Indian chiefs. 'I couldn't see the collection without seeing the house,' he explains, 'so I made an appointment with Sotheby's, and ended up buying both.' As well as amassing one of the biggest hauls of modern African art – which will be displayed in 2017 in MoCAA, a Thomas Heatherwick-designed museum in Cape Town – Zeitz is also a serious collector of Western and Native American artefacts. As he rather disarmingly admits, few other museums, other than those in major cities, hold as many important pieces.

Throughout the house, in alcoves and on tables, there are priceless Native American garments and weaponry on show, from war shirts owned by famous ➤

Above, the terrace of the main house. *Opposite,* a selection of adobe architecture, art and furniture at Rancho Alegre, and owners Jochen Zeitz and Kate Garwood



HE'S AS MULTIFACETED AS A HALL OF MIRRORS: THE FORMER CEO OF PUMA, A CONSERVATIONIST, AN ART PATRON AND A PILOT WHO SPEAKS SIX LANGUAGES

➤ Sioux chiefs to a rare three-bladed tomahawk. Walls are hung with tribal hides, original gold-tone Edward Curtis photographs and early-19th-century Karl Bodmer watercolours. A pool-room is lined with shelves of fine Western books, antique chaps, Warhol Cowboys and Indians originals ('My first purchase when I had a bit of money in my 20s'). And to top it all off, a selection of historic American manuscripts and artefacts is exhibited in a chapel.

As you might expect from someone with such a keen eye, this is no casual collection. It's meticulous, both in conception and presentation. There are letters from John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Receipts from Paul Revere. Documents from Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. Pictures of outlaws and sheriffs who tracked them down – from Jesse James to Wyatt Earp. The only mugshot of Butch Cassidy. General Custer's last uniform and hat.

'In Washington museums there are fine collections,' he says. 'But they aren't as personal as mine. Here, you can sit and enjoy it, live with it, breathe it. And this is only a third of it; I have drawers more, if you want to see them.' Slightly reeling, I choose to visit the bison instead, pat the horses, dip my toes in the infinity pool with views over stony orange desert, and then sip a glass of chilled Californian wine while watching a blazing sunset with Zeitz's British fiancée, Kate Garwood.

The LA-based film producer, looking every bit the cowgirl in her torn jeans, white broderie-anglaise blouse and wide-brimmed hat, says the people in the area were as much of an attraction to them as the house. 'What's great here is that no one gives a damn who you are. Our neighbours do all sorts: one's a rodeo rider and horse-trainer, another founded the October Gallery in London, another runs the Eaves Movie Ranch, where Gene Kelly once lived and now a film set. They welcome you and then leave you to do what you want.'

Which in their case was finishing renovations on the house so it could be rented out when they weren't there, and, of course, making time to explore Santa Fe, from pre-Pueblo caves and historic buildings to spas, restaurants and galleries (see page 68).

'When we had our engagement party here last year, friends from all over the world flew in and had a ball,' Garwood says. The ranch is made for parties. It has its own barn, with four wagons, two old American cars, a replica 19th-century Wild West shop – 'a great spot for drinks' – a full recording studio, and even its own Spanish-style saloon housing a saddle that belonged to Simón Bolivar (after whom Bolivia is named).

Although the couple plan to spend time between their homes here, in Kenya and in London, it's clear they're pretty smitten with Santa Fe. 'When I was 22, I drove cars for people from one side of the country to another, and fell in love with this area,' Zeitz says. 'I vowed I'd come back – and now I have.' *Rancho Alegre (sleeps 22) costs about £8,000 a night, with a minimum stay of a week. Book on www.casasdesantafe.com* ➤

Above, the kitchen with *bóveda*, an arched natural-brick ceiling



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LOCAL KNOW-HOW
SANTA FE

Jochen Zeitz has made his home in the oldest state capital in the USA. He shares his highlights of the red-walled mountain town that has drawn artists, dropouts and Hollywood stars for years



FOR AN OFFBEAT TRIP

'About a 10-minute drive from our house on New Mexico's Turquoise Trail is the former mining town of Madrid (pronounced MAD-rid), which was abandoned and recolonised in the 1970s by artists and eccentrics: cowboys, potters, jewellers, sculptors. It's an interesting place to get an insight into the lives of people who have opted out of mainstream society and built an alternative way of life. Stop by **Shugarman's Little Chocolate Shop** for the best chocolate in town or grab a bison burger and a beer at **The Hollar**. And if you have a spare hour, take a quick detour off State Road 14 to Cerrillos and visit the **Casa Grande Trading Post and Museum**, then call in on our neighbours, the **Eaves Movie Ranch**, and immerse yourself in the old cowboy-movie town where many classic Westerns were made. To get outdoors, **Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument** has spectacular landscapes and is the perfect place for a hike.'

FOR A HISTORY LESSON

'Another celebrated local character was artist Georgia O'Keeffe, who lived in Abiquiu, about an hour's drive north of Santa Fe. Her home is furnished just as she left it, and **Ghost Ranch**, where she worked, is surrounded by the canyons and mountains she painted. The **Georgia O'Keeffe Museum** in Santa Fe also has a great selection of her American Modernist pieces.'

FOR ART

'The city of Santa Fe is home to about 300 galleries. Some of the best are clustered in the same area, located along the one-mile stretch of Canyon Road. Our favourites include **Nedra Matteucci**, which has historic and contemporary collections; **Michael Smith**, for American-Indian art and antiquities in a 275-year-old adobe home; **El Zaguán**, in a beautiful Territorial-style hacienda and gardens, which houses the work of artists in residence; and **Morning Star**, which shows Native American pieces. It's also worth stopping at **SITE**, a hub for modern art. The galleries by the old railway always have good exhibitions, too, including **Gerald Peters** and **TAI Modern**, which specialises in Japanese pieces.'

FOR REFUELLING

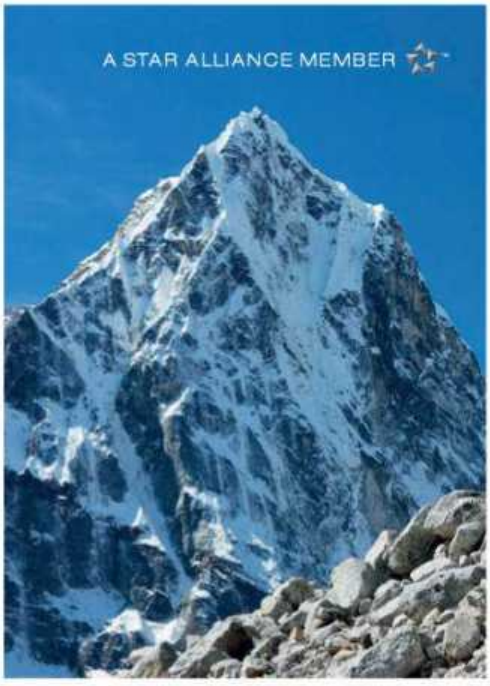
'The last two galleries (above) are best visited on weekends when the neighbouring **farmers' market** is on. Everything is locally grown and made, and the produce is incredible. We buy almost all our food here, unless we're eating out. If we are, favourites for lunch include the fresh salads at **Vinaigrette** and **Modern General** next door for delicious juices and sandwiches in a beautifully curated shop. Also don't miss **The Teahouse** at the top of Canyon Road, which has an epic selection of teas and organic food, **Shake Foundation** for its green-chilli cheeseburgers, and the **San Marcos Café and Feed Store** on State Highway 14, a rustic joint that's become our local and serves typical south-western dishes. For dinner, you can get pretty much whatever you want, from Japanese food at **Izanami** in the Ten Thousand Waves spa hotel, where you can soak in a tub with views before dinner, to the French restaurant **Bouche** for delicious bistro-style cooking, **Georgia** for shrimp and grits or homemade mac and cheese, **The Compound** for what they call refined modern-American food (Hudson Valley duck breast, pan-roasted Berkshire pork tenderloin), and, for a fun night out with live music, **El Farol**.'

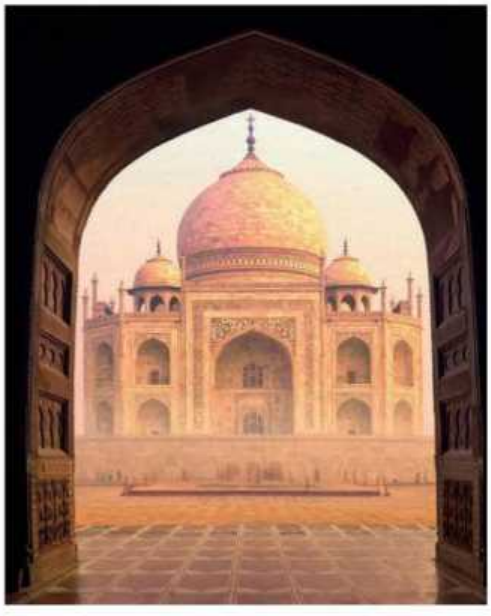
FOR SHOPPING

'When friends come to visit, we take them into the city to buy authentic Western gear. Our favourite shop is **Santa Fe Vintage**: the store in town is great but the owner Scott also has a massive warehouse full of treasure near the airport (by appointment only). To pick up new cowboy boots, head to **Santa Fe Boots and Boogie** and **O'Farrell** for custom-fit Western hats. And if you're looking for something strong after all that, **The Pink Adobe's Dragon Room** serves fantastic Margaritas in a 400-year-old building – the perfect way to end a Santa Fe day.'

For more about Santa Fe and New Mexico, visit www.santafe.org and www.discoveramerica.com







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TAKE IT AWAY

Limited-edition sunglasses with crystal Swarovski daisies, POA, **Dolce & Gabbana** (www.dolcegabbana.com). Photographed by Amy Currell. Set designer: Lora Avedian

EDITED BY **FIONA JOSEPH**





I PRESENT TO YOU

Christine Innamorato, the artistic director of classic French children's-wear label Bonpoint, knows what it takes to please little ones. Here are her hits for family fun in Paris

Where do you like to shop?

'I love browsing the hidden alleyways of the flea market at Saint-Ouen, and stalls such as the furniture seller Bruno Ract Madox. Visits there tend to inspire my collections for Bonpoint. My favourite furniture store is Galerie Downtown on rue de Seine, curated by François Laffanour. It has beautiful pieces from designers including Jean Prouvé, Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand. For children's furniture, Portobello on rue Notre Dame des Champs is good and Brocante Hétéroclite on rue de Vaugirard stocks wonderful vintage school desks. Sentou, *below*, on boulevard Raspail, also has a very nice selection of objects, including lights for children's bedrooms.'



Most stylish toy stores?

'Au Nain Bleu, which sells online, is great for beautiful teddy bears, doll's houses and rocking chairs. Si Tu Veux inside Galerie Vivienne is a really lovely shop, which sells games as well as classic toys based on the last 50 years of kids'-books characters. The Bonpoint flagship on rue de Tournon is the only place you can pick up child-size couture dresses and crowns. It is a magical space for little girls. Our exclusive toy collection is also stocked there, plus Cerise, our signature doll, along with her entire wardrobe.'

Which galleries are best for children?

'I really enjoy taking kids to the French National Museum of Natural History to look at the glass cases along the walls displaying jars of animals. You swear they are moving. And Galerie des Enfants is a permanent exhibition about the diversity of the living world, evolution and the impact of humans on the environment, which is very educational. You can touch displays and it's surprising to see the huge variety in both the plant and animal kingdoms.'

And the nicest parks?

'The majority of Parisian parks are lovely for family outings but my favourite is the Jardin du Luxembourg. Children can play in the sand boxes and run around freely. There are also pony rides, little remote-control wooden boats that sail on the pond, merry-go-rounds and much, much more. If you're looking for more privacy, Parc de la Villette is perfect. They run workshops for keen herb growers, and kids can learn how to cultivate seeds, flowers and plants.'





From top: Felix cat bag, £87; glitter Derbie shoes, £138; floral baby dress, £87; flower crown, £67, all **Bonpoint** (www.bonpoint.com)



Fabric footprints

Upholstery needn't be confined to furniture this winter as interiors influence our look from the feet up.



Fifi boots, £895, **Christian Louboutin** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Embroidered suede boots, £835, **Isabel Marant** (www.isabelmarant.com)



Mysen suede boots, £850, **Jimmy Choo** (www.jimmychoo.com)



Leather boots, £675, **Tabitha Simmons** (www.tabithasimmons.com)

What are the top family hotels?
'Without hesitation, Le Royal Monceau, Raffles Paris, which we collaborate with from time to time. It has great workshops for kids. Le Meurice is another good choice: the staff can tell you what activities are going on at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, such as a boat ride on the Enchanted River in the middle of a nature reserve, which is brilliant.'

Best place for hot chocolate?
'It's hard to beat Angelina on rue de Rivoli; the kids are never disappointed when we go there.'





From left: a Jean Prouvé table and Georges Jouve mirrorat Galerie Downtown; Parc de la Villette; Tokyo Eat in the Palais de Tokyo



What are the most child-friendly restaurants?
'For breakfast, children love Bread and Roses on rue Madame. The bread is delicious. I also really like taking my daughter to Rose Bakery on rue de Martyrs: it is very simple but fantastic. Tokyo Eat in the Palais de Tokyo is a fun space, with a menu that's perfect for family lunches; the same applies to Mama Shelter. Le Cherche Midi is a wonderful place for delicious Italian feasts. Both children and adults love it. I have a weakness for the madeleines made by Sebastien Gaudard, as well as the classic Parisian patisseries. The other must-visit spot is Carette on Place des Vosges. It reminds me of my childhood. My daughter is a big fan of the strawberry tart there.'



SHOP WATCH

Gucci, Milan

Like a Lewis Carroll of the fashion world, Gucci's creative director Alessandro Michele has turned the label on its head. Gone are the dresses split thigh-high over bronze limbs and models with Farrah Fawcett hair. In their place is the cast of a fantastical world: one part Mad Hatter's tea party, the other a romantic hanging garden with ladybirds, fish and pineapple jewel motifs. His first store makeover, at the Milan flagship, is just as extraordinary. Chairs hang on the fabric-covered walls, drawers pull out from industrial-sized travellers' trunks and the colour palette is one of the palest pink and lilac set off by cherry red and peacock blue. Michele describes it as understated drama – we like to think of it as fashion theatre at its best. *Via Monte Napoleone 5/7. www.gucci.com*



Select suede boots, £355, **Russell & Bromley** (www.russellandbromley.co.uk)



Floral flocked boots, £895, **Stella McCartney** (www.matchesfashion.com)



Glitter boots, £800, **Maison Margiela** (www.net-a-porter.com)



Damask jacquard boots, £525, **Mary Katrantzou** (www.levelshoedistrict.com)



Suede tassel boots, £792, **Paul Andrew** (www.avenue32.com)

PHOTOGRAPHS: **ARCAID/UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES; PHOTOS 12/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO**

WINTER SUN: THE LOOK

POST-MODESTY

Modesty died when clothes were born. Or so said Mark Twain. Any dissenters to this observation were surely silenced some time between the first upload to Instagram and 2014's telescopic spike of selfie-stick sales. This year's news that people are taking professional photographers on holiday with them just feels like we're dancing on modesty's grave. For a short while, the thinking fashionista's response to this metastasising narcissism looked like it might be normcore: neutral colours, shapeless clothes, aspirations to androgyny, basic wardrobes for wilful wallflowers. Swimming against the current – as she has done her whole career – is Miuccia Prada, our Derrida in a dress and heels. Her resort collection is, as she has it, 'post-modest'. And isn't it just? Space rockets, python skins, cutely cut nylon, pop prints, fashion-forward bunnies: these are clothes that might qualify as normcore at a transgender debutante ball on Saturn, but for the rest of us they attest to Miuccia's apparent sense that the way to combat the stupid and superficial is to out-do it, run past it, laughing at it in your rear mirror. How then to best wear these post-modest clothes? Away from the limelight, it turns out. Off-line. In the shadows. Modestly. DAVID ANNAND

Leather dress, £3,235; striped yellow-and-black top, £220; shoes, £610; earrings, £200; bag, £2,320, all **Prada Resort Collection** (www.prada.com)

PHOTOGRAPH: **JAMES MEAKIN**

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COVER TO COVER

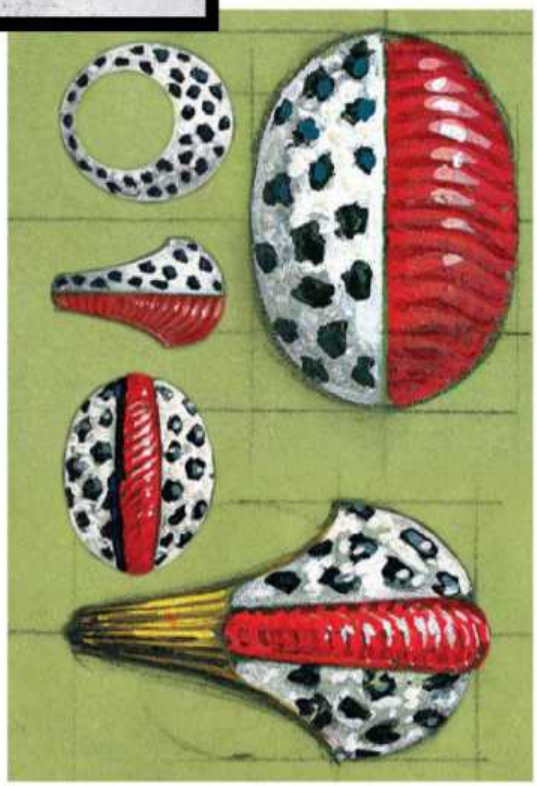
Amass a worldwide collection of jewels without leaving the coffee table, says **Jessica Diamond**



PARIS

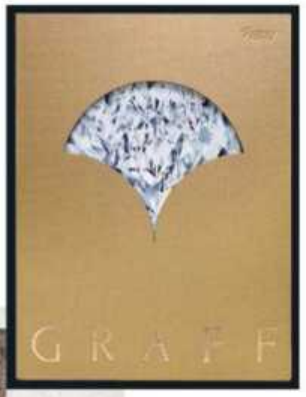
CARTIER

No other jewellery house has taken such ownership of an animal as Cartier has with the panther. Its distinctive form has prowled through the Parisian jeweller's offering since its first inclusion in 1914. *Cartier Panthère* charts the big cat's progress in all its bejewelled incarnations, from fierce to sleek, playful to graphic. Its metamorphosis is a true reflection of changing design through the decades. *Published by Assouline, £120 (www.assouline.co.uk)*





From top left: panther medallion in agate by Cartier, 2014; its washing process; the brand's illustration of bespoke rings, 1963. *Above,* vintage panther-clasp bracelet, 1930





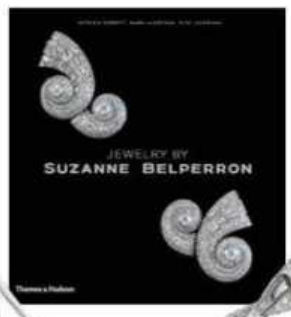
Left, Laurence Graff in Monaco with a suitcase full of jewels, 1980s. *Below,* leaf-motif bracelet in white gold and diamonds, POA, **Graff** (www.graffdiamonds.com)

LONDON

GRAFF

How many globally important jewellery houses still have their founding father at the helm? Less than a handful because it takes decades, and sometimes centuries, to establish a credible heritage while building up the means to attract big spenders. One such example is Laurence Graff – a formidable business man, diamantaire, hotelier, founder of a charitable foundation and, in recognition of all this, an OBE. A new book, concisely entitled *Graff*, sheds light on the man and the company he founded in 1960. The real fascination lies in the chapter 'Beginnings', where jewellery historian Vivienne Becker delves into his humble East End roots. She describes how as a young boy he helped out in his mother's sweet shop: 'It's tempting to imagine the jars of glistening sweets, with their glints of light and colour resembling the gemstones he was later to accumulate.' *Published by Rizzoli International, £65 (www.graffdiamonds.com). Proceeds from sales will be donated to Graff's charitable foundation FACET*





Bamboo necklace with detachable brooches in diamond, platinum and gold from Belperron's private collection. *Above left,* illustration from the brand's archives



Below, Coronet cuff in aquamarine, cabochon ruby and gold, private collection Groëne et Darde for Herz-Belperron

NEW YORK

BELPERRON

Unless you're seriously into gems you probably haven't heard of designer Suzanne Belperron, and yet her bold, organic aesthetic still informs jewellery design today. Though Belperron died in 1983, her vision is to live once more via father-and-son team Ward and Nico Landrigan, who purchased the rights to her name and a staggering 9,200 original drawings. A salon on Fifth Avenue in New York showcases new pieces that stay true to her sketches, while the book *Jewelry by Suzanne Belperron* includes more than 300 photographs and illustrations from her vast archive. *Published by Thames & Hudson, £50 (www.belperron.com). Available from 14 December*

PHOTOGRAPH: **HAROLD GOTTSCHALK**

*LIGHTER. BRIGHTER.

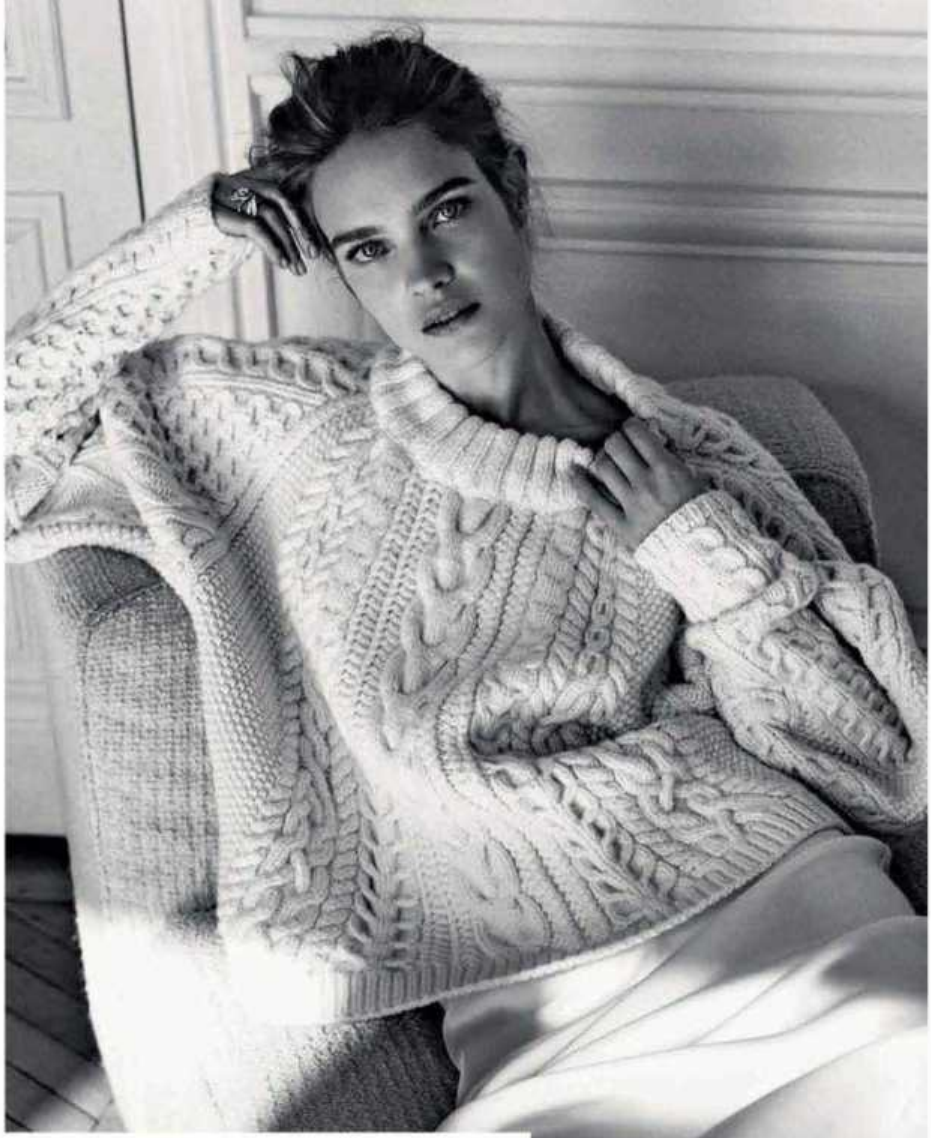


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Where do you go to relax?
'In Connecticut I can switch off and leave work behind completely. For me it feels exactly how an American summer should, with picnics on the beach, time to play with my children and lots of reading.'

Do you watch what you eat?
'At one point I had so many stomach problems I was advised to go on a blood-type diet and it's actually made a huge difference. Now I buy wild meat as opposed to chicken or beef. And I'm not meant to eat several things such as sea bass, peppers or radishes. It sounds strange, but it was very easy to adapt to. It turns out that the things that are good for me are the things that I enjoy eating most.'



How do you look after your skin while travelling?
'I have very dry skin so I use Avène toner or La Roche-Posay Thermal Spring Water, and then moisturise with Guerlain Super Aqua-Crème Day Cream. Drinking lots of water is essential when you're travelling too.'



Do you work out?
'I am lucky to have good genes. But I just started Pilates and like it a lot.'

TRAVELS WITH MY WASHBAG

NATALIA VODIANOVA

The supermodel and 50-time Vogue cover girl reveals her secrets to Tabitha Joyce



What is your favourite beauty treatment?
'I adore Paris and it's probably the best beauty destination in the world. I go to the amazing Leonor Greyl clinic for its bespoke hair treatments. And L'Institut Guerlain on the Champs-Elysées is great for a bit of time out; it's so peaceful and the massages are created especially for you.'

How do you treat yourself?
'My biggest indulgence is definitely ice cream. I love it.'



Which products are always in your hand luggage?
'I like to keep a hand-cleansing gel, some lip balm, and shine-control powder such as Guerlain's Météorites Voyage.'



How do you look after your hair on holiday?
'Philip Kingsley's Elasticizer is a brilliant, deep-moisturising treatment that I always take with me. I also pack Leonor Greyl oils and Viviscal shampoo and conditioner. I think a lot of people forget how important it is to look after their hair in the sun.'

Do you have any tips for keeping up appearances after a long-haul flight?
'The best advice I've ever been given is to wear foundation. It's like wearing clothes: it protects your skin, which is important if I'm going somewhere cold. I'll always keep my nails classic with neutral colours. My best anti-jet-lag tip is to eat light and try to choose food that boosts energy.'

What is your go-to look for the red carpet?
'For evening make-up I like to go more sophisticated. I'll put on some volumising mascara – Guerlain's Maxi Lash So Volume is a great one – and a good red lipstick.'



From top: Super Aqua-Crème Day Cream, £73, **Guerlain** (www.johnlewis.com). Thermal Spring Water, £7.50, **La Roche-Posay** (www.boots.com). Régénérescence Naturelle, £34, **Leonor Greyl Avène** (www.selfridges.com). Elasticizer, £21, **Philip Kingsley** (www.philipkingsley.co.uk). Météorites Voyage, £40, **Guerlain** (as before). Gentle Toner, £12, **Avène** (www.boots.com)

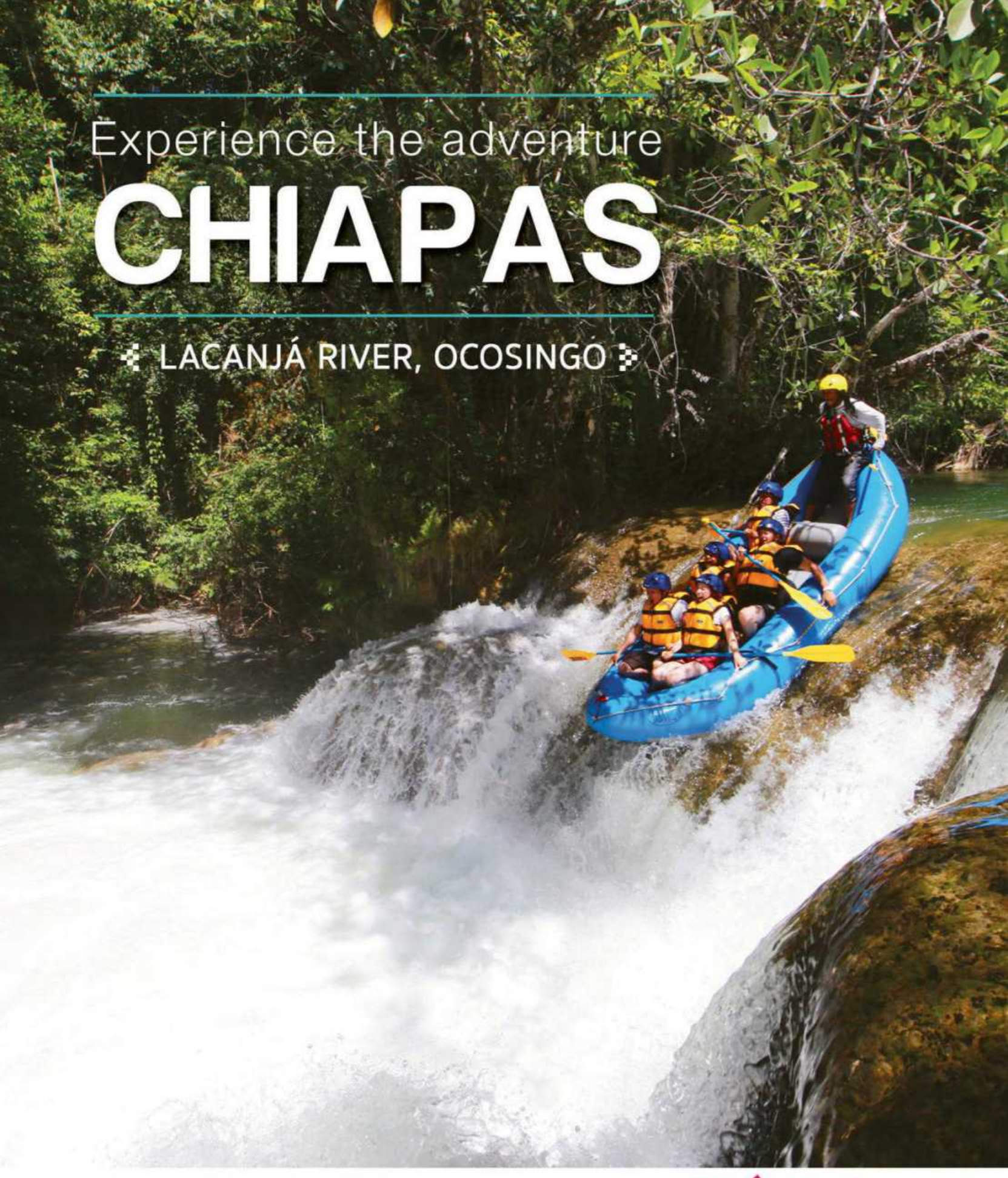
PHOTOGRAPH: **ALASDAIR MCLELLAN**



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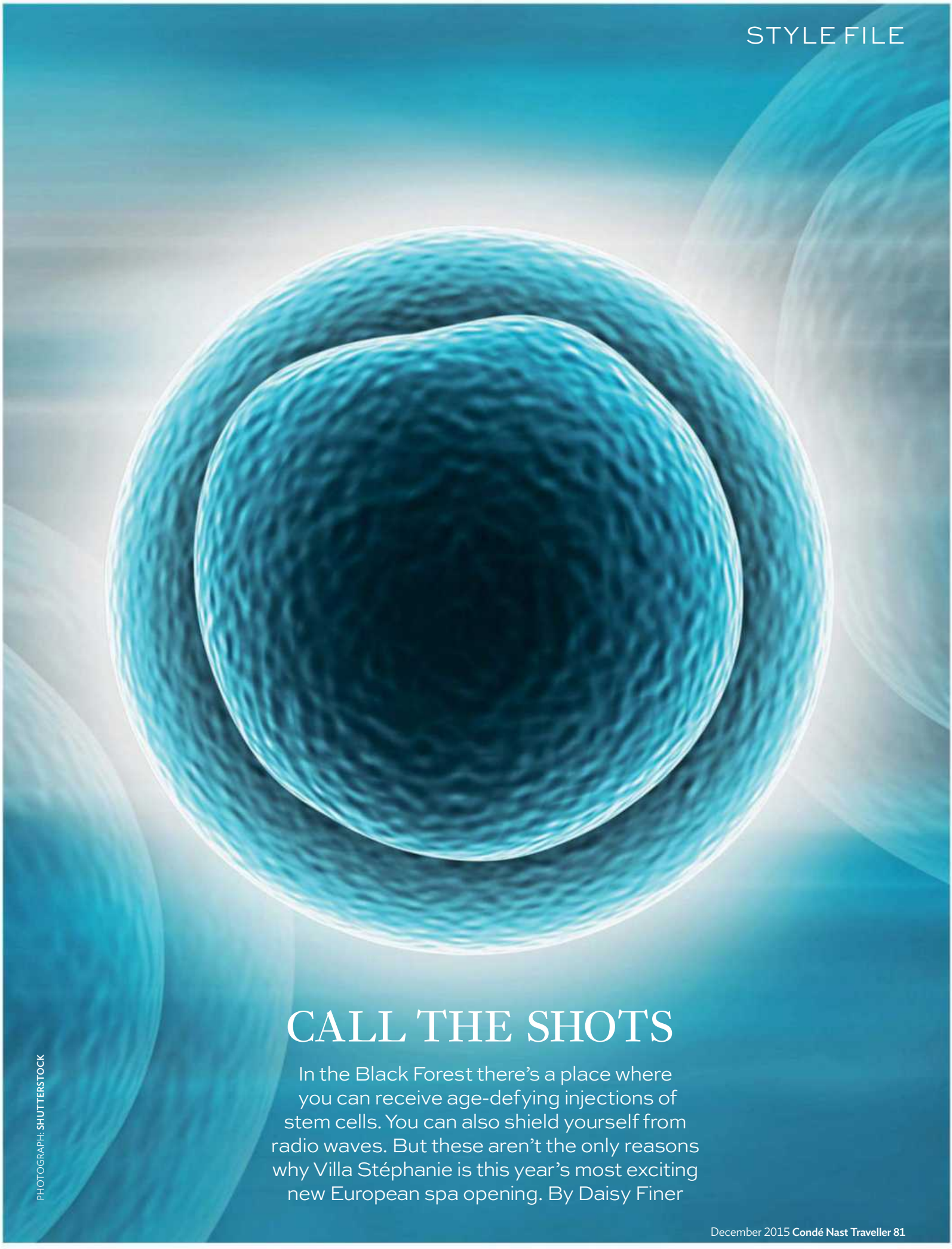
The Joule Hotel, USA



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CALL THE SHOTS

In the Black Forest there's a place where you can receive age-defying injections of stem cells. You can also shield yourself from radio waves. But these aren't the only reasons why Villa Stéphanie is this year's most exciting new European spa opening. By Daisy Finer

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK

Villa Stephanie offers one of the most personalised and private spa experiences anywhere. Opened in January in the southern German town of Baden-Baden, it's incredibly well conceived and utterly discreet: a zingy, baby-grand bolthole set in gloriously groomed gardens (just a hop away from the Brenners Park-Hotel, so think of it as umbilically attached), and with just 12 bedrooms and three suites.

What is immediately apparent is that it pairs an old-fashioned sensibility with a gloriously up-to-speed outlook. The medi-team use injections of fresh pig stem cells for rejuvenation therapy (more on this later), but don't expect an all-white, space-age interior. The clinic itself is cool and clean, but unlike the Mayr centres of Austria or other medi-spas such as SHA Wellness Clinic in Alicante, Villa Stéphanie is a proper hotel. Despite the 19th-century architecture, it has modern touches such as glossy books, fresh flowers in the bedrooms and Bamford goodies and mini candles in the bathrooms. The beds are deep and comfortable. Downstairs is a floral-themed sitting room for help-yourself sandwiches and smoothies (bootcamp this is not). There are artworks on the walls. The place is more akin to a majestic spa villa than a clinic – a secret, moneyed enclave dedicated to those who want to feel better. The 15 treatment rooms aren't tucked away in the basement, but instead they have private terraces overlooking greenery, and are set just off the lobby so that guests can potter about in their dressing gowns should they wish. Nobody does, though – it is very smart. One Saudi prince checked in for six weeks for a serious body-and-mind overhaul.

Cleverly, guests are allocated a personal concierge throughout their stay, who will lend not just a kind ear but will also co-ordinate appointments with doctors, nutritionists, trainers and therapists. So not only are you superbly looked after, but you never have to repeat physical concerns or targets to the various people you see. And as the concierge sees you daily, it is easy to address new niggles, swap appointments or fit more in. There's no wrangling for slots with other guests, no queues and, crucially, no forms. It's like having your own personal spa PA: someone who gets to know you, leads you through the



whole experience and has an incredible knowledge of all the solutions offered by the medi-team (got a cold coming on? Don't worry, let's book a vitamin C drip).

But, first things first. After a short flight to Strasbourg, your first appointment will be with dynamic spa director Hans-Peter Veit, whose specialities include both nutrition and sport. He will discuss your routine (or lack of it), why you're here and what you want to achieve. A hi-tech full body analysis reveals in spectacular detail the dreaded visceral fat levels, water content and muscle tone, BMI, ideal weight, and what your daily calorie consumption should be. Even here the methods at Villa Stéphanie seem a step ahead. There is no need to undress for this test. You simply stand on a machine with your shoes off and hold the handles. There's no clumsy manual measuring or stripping down to your underwear.

Next up for discussion is food. Nothing is doled out school-dinner style. Diets are meticulously and individually designed. The kitchen creates a variety of bespoke detox menus, tweaked to the personal needs of each guest, and taking into consideration details such as allergies, intolerances and plain dislikes. Mention that you are not a fan of buckwheat, but like spelt and brown rice, and meals will reflect this. And what food. Instead of deprivation there are carefully constructed, three-course extravaganzas. For lunch, beetroot carpaccio might be followed by fresh turbot with spinach and steamed quinoa, and to finish a light blueberry pancake with a fruit compote so tasty you can't believe it's allowed. All this for only 400 calories. (Though be careful not to eat the bread and butter which the kitchen sometimes sends over). Everything is wonderfully satisfying and delicious, and though you can request to eat less, or even fast, the main idea here is that you learn ➤

IT'S MORE AKIN TO A MAJESTIC SPA VILLA THAN A CLINIC – A SECRET ENCLAVE FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO FEEL BETTER

PHOTOGRAPH: GALLERYSTOCK



➤ about portion sizes, go for the long-term solution rather than the quick fix, and are inspired to integrate a similar approach back at home.

It is worth knowing that all the guests who stay at Villa Stéphanie are here to spa, but in the larger Brenners Park-Hotel, reached by a long interior corridor and with several restaurants, most of the people are just on holiday. (The spa town of Baden-Baden survived World War II unscathed and is very pretty, with a river running through it and the Alps all around). So if you are cleansing you will probably want to have room service to avoid drooling over cakes and chips. Thankfully, the rooms are lovely places to be, with revolutionary switches that will turn off Wi-Fi completely (the walls are embedded with a specially treated copper grid). It's yet another measure to put temptation at bay. Veit says, 'I've learnt the hard way that digital detoxing is important. A few years ago I was on my phone while on holiday and I tripped and broke my leg. My family told me they would never go on holiday again if I didn't stop taking calls from work.'

THE FRESH STEM CELLS ARE SAID TO REGULATE METABOLISM AND REPUTED TO TRANSFORM DISEASED ORGANS

THE BLACK FOREST is stunning, bubbling with waterfalls. What is wonderful is that you can reach the woods by walking straight out of the hotel. The exercise programmes include not just complimentary group classes (from aqua fitness to full body workouts, biking and Nordic walking) but also one-on-one guided treks through the trees. The forest is vast, with numerous tracks, and mountain-hut restaurants for lunch. Veit will make sure you order lean barbecued turkey marinated in fresh herbs and served with salad, which doesn't sound anywhere near as remarkably good as it tastes. (I don't think I've ever eaten better turkey). There are also excellent personal trainers and private yoga sessions for both body and mind – pranayama therapy (yogic breathing) is a wonderful way to calm down your central nervous system. Guests are also given one of those wearable devices that charts calorie consumption and encourages movement; it even lets you know when you have been sitting still too long by flashing. Anyone with a desk job should have one.

The science-driven medi-centre, Haus Julius, is designed to feng-shui principles and is one of the most comprehensive I have ever come across. It's headed by Don Draper lookalike Dr König, who is exactly the sort of man mountain that you would trust with your life. He is one of those doctors who gently diagnoses on sight: 'Your lymphatic system is a little slow,' he tells me. 'I can tell by the colour of your eyes.' Traditionally trained but passionate about a holistic approach, König has a bagful of homeopathic remedies at his fingertips, as well as acupuncture, kinesiology, osteopathy, cupping and acutapping – practised by him or a member of his team.

He also presides over a lot of fridges, filled with amino acids, magnesium and iron ('most mothers are iron deficient'), as well as fresh stem cells, kept in tiny phials labelled according to which part of the pig they were extracted from, be it thymus, placenta, spleen or brain. He is softly spoken about this therapy: 'We don't want to hard-sell it like some clinics.' But he's adamant that pigs are the safest animals to use, due in part to their similar genetic code, and that the effects are outstanding.

Generally, 10 to 20 thawed injections are administered into your bottom over a period of days or weeks. The OZE (organ cell extracts) contain bioactive substances such as enzymes, hormones and transmitters (everything cells need to function properly) and are said to regulate metabolism, slow down degeneration and activate regeneration. In short, they are reputed to transform diseased organs. König swears by it (he certainly looks young). Chinese clients, interestingly, usually opt for cells extracted from the testicles, which are meant to increase vigour. But above and beyond anything sensationalist, this is truly somewhere to come when you need help. The doctor can arrange anything from hip replacements in nearby hospitals to post-cancer care. I can't think of a nicer place to recuperate. Alongside him is a team of equal expertise, including top dentists, physiotherapists, gynaecologists and an aesthetics doctor who offers fillers, Botox and similar. 'We don't do plaster disasters,' says König, 'or cutting. We ensure you can show your face at dinner.'

A SHIATSU SESSION WITH Pierre Clavereaux or his protégé Othman Challouf is incredible, and another of the highlights at the Villa. Breathe through a painful series of vigorously quick and assisted full-body stretches, all while you lie fully clothed on a low mattress. You feel long and lean afterwards, even if you are really not. I can take or leave the facials (they are too wishy-washy for me, perhaps because all I really long for is a proper neck massage), but don't miss a physio session with Martina Nesselhauf. Her gentle mix of strokes and craniosacral therapy releases tension in all the right areas. After just two days you start to feel different, so just imagine what a week will be like.

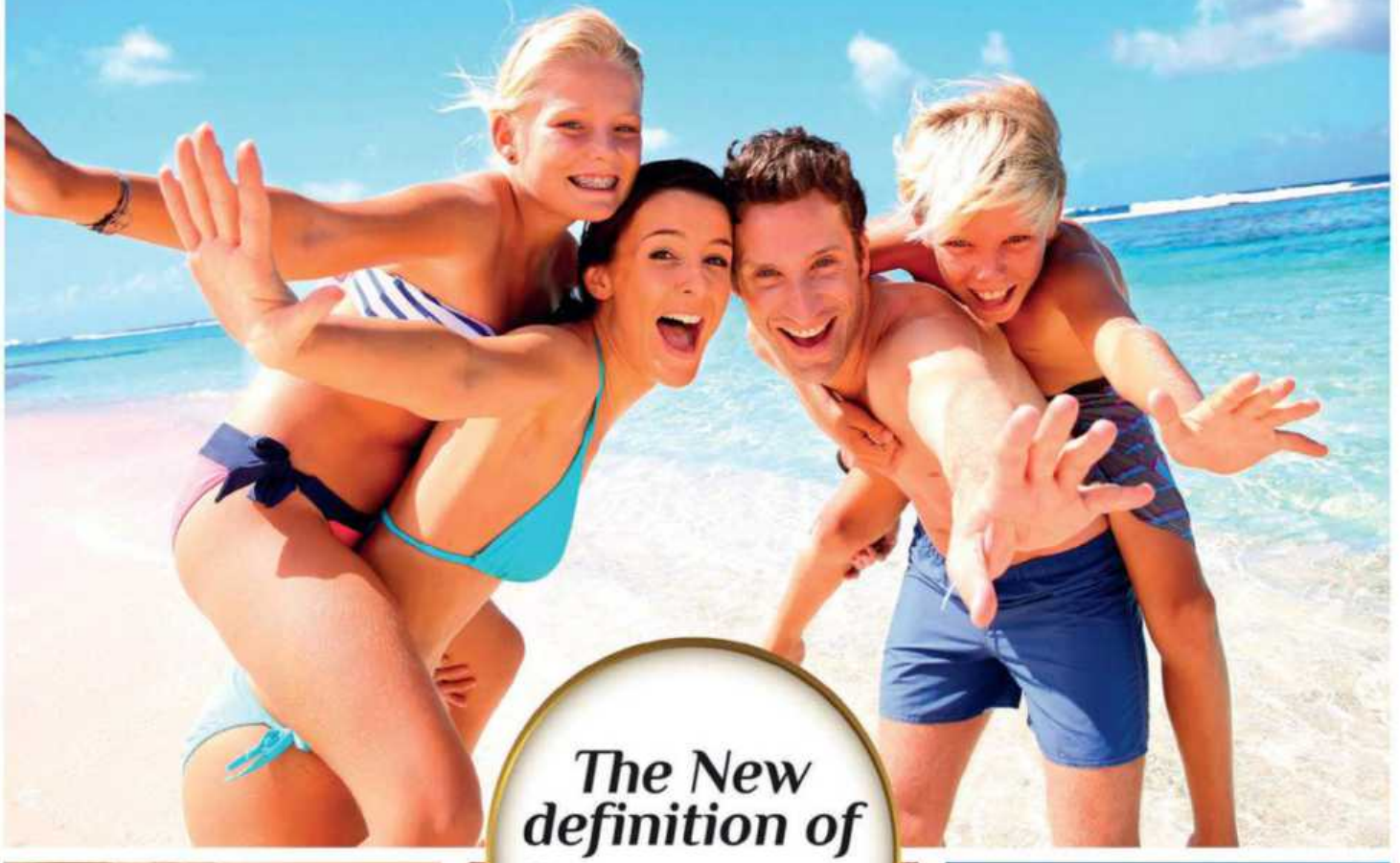
On your last night you will be treated to a meal at the two-Michelin-starred restaurant in the original Brenners Park-Hotel, where the gourmet detox menu knocks spots off anywhere else. Caviar is served with feather-light blinis made from cauliflower; the pink roasted saddle of venison comes with savoy cabbage, glazed cherries and an elderflower olive jus. Like everything at Villa Stéphanie, it is exceptional.

BOOK IT *Doubles from £395 (www.villastephanie.com). Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; www.healingholidays.co.uk/condenast) can arrange a seven-day Brenners Vitality Detox from £3,199 per person sharing. This includes flights, transfers, seven nights' accommodation in a Stéphanie Superior room, full board, and all inclusions as per the Brenners Vitality Detox programme – from an entrance interview with the detox specialist, full body analysis and a personalised daily menu to treatments such as a deacidifying alkaline bath, body scrub and two training sessions with a personal trainer.*

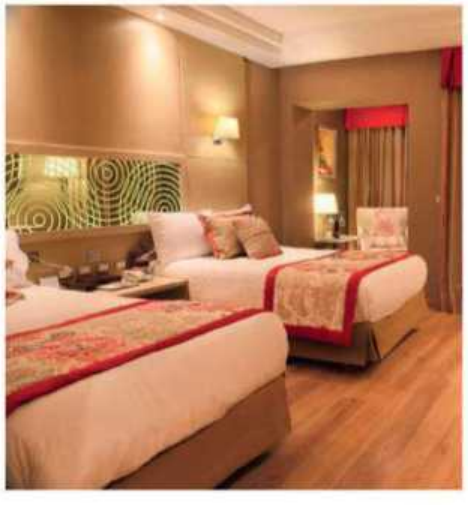
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IF YOU ONLY PACK 4 THINGS... *for the slopes*

Essential ski kit extends to more than just gloves and goggles. Olivia Falcon on her top beauty buys that perform on the peaks

FOR DAY

Hand on heart, **Chanel's CC Cream SPF50** is one of my all-time favourite products. Its sole purpose is to make you look great, even in all sorts of snowy shenanigans: haring down black runs, making snow angels, drinking schnapps on the back of a toboggan. The non-gloopy formula is loaded with kick-ass UVA and UVB sunscreens and a tint to colour-correct skin, tone down redness, hide dark circles and generally bestow an overall dewiness that shouldn't be possible in Arctic conditions. *£44; www.chanel.com*

FOR HAIR

Helmet head, the bane of many a stylish skier, is easily thwarted if you know about **Kérastase Matérialiste**, a genius thickening spray-gel that gives guts to the limpest hair. It uses a geeky ingredient, intracylane, which supersizes every single hair shaft (great for follically challenged girls and boys) and holds styles without making hair feel crispy. Like all Kérastase products, it smells good too, and will camouflage that wet-dog whiff you get from a sodden woolly hat. *£19.50; www.kerastase.co.uk*



FOR EYES

You don't need a blizzard for mascara to go wrong. **Estée Lauder Little Black Primer** is a step up from the regular versions. In fact, it's not mascara at all, but rather a grown-up lash tint with mighty grip. Estée Lauder is so precise it's likely they tested it in a wind tunnel or subjected people to repeat viewings of *The Notebook*. Wouldn't it be great to ski off the slopes and into the Schloss for lunch without diverting to the bathroom to fix panda eyes? Now you can. *£20; www.esteelauder.co.uk*

FOR NIGHT

Kiehl's new **Ultra Facial Deep Moisture Balm** is turning out to be a word-of-mouth winner. It winter-proofs skin as you sleep from the dual assault of alpine chill and central heating with edelweiss extract and Antarcticine, a micro-organism from the frozen mud of Antarctica that locks in moisture. Which is pretty cool. *£24; www.kiehls.co.uk*





PHOTOGRAPH: RM/TRUNK ARCHIVE



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MAN ON A MISSION

THE MAN

Our Men's Editor David Annand prefers his adventures air-conditioned, with room service, and wouldn't mind an extra cushion if there's one going. But for every country-house hotel stayed in there's a tale of hitchhiking around New Zealand or lying in the desert in sand teaming with cockroaches.

THE MISSION

A caper up the eastern shore of South Africa in search of charismatic megafauna: four days of rugged off-roading, campfire carousing and one incredible encounter.

MILES TRAVELLED LAST YEAR

32,300 (many of them up and down the Lea River footpath pushing a buggy).

MUST PACK

'On to the back seat of my Land Rover I always chuck an Oliver Spencer leather doctor's bag containing the latest book by Visual Editions (the perkiest publishers in the business), a pair of Wayfarers, and a bottle of that staple of the Old Fashioned: Angostura bitters. All of life's essentials.'

'Everyone else in this small inflatable boat is either a racing driver, a no-limits free diver or the kind of man who needs little more to scale Everest than a good pair of boots and a Kit Kat in his pocket. I am none of these things, not even close. We're in the Indian Ocean, just north of Coffee Bay, on South Africa's wild east coast. We power out against the swell, the boat bouncing rhythmically against the waves. One of my fellow adventurers shouts over the noise of the engine to ask if I'm OK. He is the second person to do this. There is a consensus among the others on the expedition that I am the least capable of looking after myself. In other circumstances I might consider this an affront to my masculine pride, but I smile and give a thumbs up. Because here's the thing: I am OK. I'm not even suffering from seasickness. I'm not even scared.

And all this despite the very real prospect that the water beneath us is absolutely rammed full of apex predators. Last week – as my mum has read about on the internet – a surf competition just up the shore was disrupted when the champion had to fight off a great white. People might think the surfer was a little foolhardy, punching it on its nose, but at least he was trying to get away from the shark. We are actively seeking them out.

That's because we are on the hunt for the sardine run, the aquatic equivalent of the Serengeti migration, which every summer sees billions of sardines swim up the cold-water channel off the coast of the Eastern Cape. I'm here with TV adventure-junkie Monty Halls, who is leading our caravan of Land Rovers. He's driving a custom-built Defender with a winch system and ship-to-shore radio. It's what Bond would drive if he were a marine biologist.

The caravan has been doggedly trailing Monty, off-road and down dale, as he attempts to discover more about the mysterious sardine run. Before I arrive he had the good fortune to encounter a 3,000-strong super pod of dolphins and after I leave he and shark specialist Meaghan McCord will manage to tag a bronze whaler shark while it is biting holes in their RIB. But today is my day. Ahead of us I can see a couple of gannets circling. The holy grail of the sardine run is to witness a bait ball, a mass of panicking sardines being attacked by dolphins and sharks from below, and by dive-bombing birds from the air. We watch them intently, hoping for action. Suddenly, a whale breaks in the distance. Our skipper Ivan urges us to get into the sea.

The water is cold, choppy, foreboding. I scramble a snorkel into my mouth and plunge under. There are, as far as I can tell, no sharks. Staring down into its depths, the ocean feels infinite. In such vastness the chances of the whale swimming in our direction are surely vanishingly small. When I'm certain that I'll never see her, she appears, the white of her belly a spectral shape. She is a southern right whale, I am later told; probably an adolescent not long separated from her mother. Seven metres is the guess, the size of a small bus. Her pectoral fins are two-tone, possessed of a ballerina's line. I look over at Russell, our sage of the seas. He wears super-sized flippers and can hold his breath for two days. A DNA sample would, I don't doubt, prove him to be at least 40 per cent seal. He fills his lungs and dives down, hovering above her. They engage in what can only be described as a dance that manages to be both extremely graceful and vaguely comic: at one point she seems to be throwing her fins up in gay abandon, at another she looks as if she is reaching with her enormous fin to shake Russell's outstretched hand. Russell surfaces and suddenly I am directly above her as she swims on her back, semaphoring inter-species solidarity with her giant fins. I wave back, deeply moved to be in an undeniable if uncomprehending conversation with such a majestic animal.

I am told later that this level of interaction is the kind of thing that happens every 10 years if you're lucky. I watch her as she swims away, knowing that while I may have missed many billions of sardines, a single whale is more than enough.' *Discover and book similar adventure holidays with Land Rover and Abercrombie & Kent at www.abercrombiekent.co.uk/landrover/*



PHOTOGRAPH: **NICK DIMBLEDY**

GRAB THE KIT



From top: sweater, £295, **Raf Simons** (www.matchesfashion.com); ERO4 camcorder, £410, **GoPro** (shop.gopro.com); Seamaster Diver watch, £2,770, **Omega** (www.omegawatches.com); Seac Sub GP100 fins, £83, **Simply Scuba** (www.simplyscuba.com); shorts, £220, **Vilbrequin** (www.vilbrequin.com); leather sneakers, £265, **Common Projects** (www.mrporter.com)





Steve McQueen T-shirt, £35, **Barbour International** (www.harrods.com). Leather bag, £650, **Mulberry** (www.mulberry.com)





Cotton-blend shorts, £155, **Remi Relief** (www.mrporter.com). Sunglasses, £190, **Prada** (www.davidclulow.com)





BeoPlay A2 portable speaker, £299, **B&O Play** (www.harveynichols.com)

Hotel on the scene: One&Only Palmilla

THE MOOD: MODERN MACHISMO

Ever since Sinatra and friends started flying down to Mexico's Baja California Sur in the 1950s, the Palmilla in Los Cabos became a favourite with Hollywood types. Reopened this summer after a massive redesign following some mistreatment by Hurricane Odile, it's back with a spring in its step. The One&Only retreat, under the protective guardianship of managing director Peter Bowling – previously of sunshine giants The Cotton House in Mustique and Jumby Bay in Antigua – has gone from old hacienda to a smart space that wouldn't be out of place in Manhattan. Seared, the new steakhouse restaurant by Jean-Georges Vongerichten, is a marble palace with a glass-walled meat cellar and overlooks the crashing Pacific surf – from December to March you can see humpback whales breaching close inshore. At the main restaurant, Agua by Larbi, fresh produce from the hotel's organic garden is served, and musicians serenade guests from a distance. There's a new spa, meditation centre and state-of-the-art gym, plus surfing lessons from Tropicsurf. Not all has changed: the old chapel, originally built for the hacienda's staff, still looks down respectfully at the pleasure-seekers sitting on the hotel's landscaped terraces above the golden sands. For an unforgettable experience, book Villa Cortez – a favourite with film directors for its impressive private theatre and cutting room, where many a blockbuster has been edited over endless Margaritas.

TIM ECOTT *+52 624 146 7000; www.oneandonlyresorts.com. Doubles from about £530*



Catwalk look S/S 16, **Bottega Veneta**





Set of three notebooks, £20, **Antica Cartotecnica** (www.mrporter.com). Leica C compact camera, £550, **Leica** (www.selfridges.com)





Extreme eau de toilette, £85, **Tom Ford** (www.mrporter.com). Wool and cashmere overcoat, £1,180, **Givenchy** (www.mrporter.com)



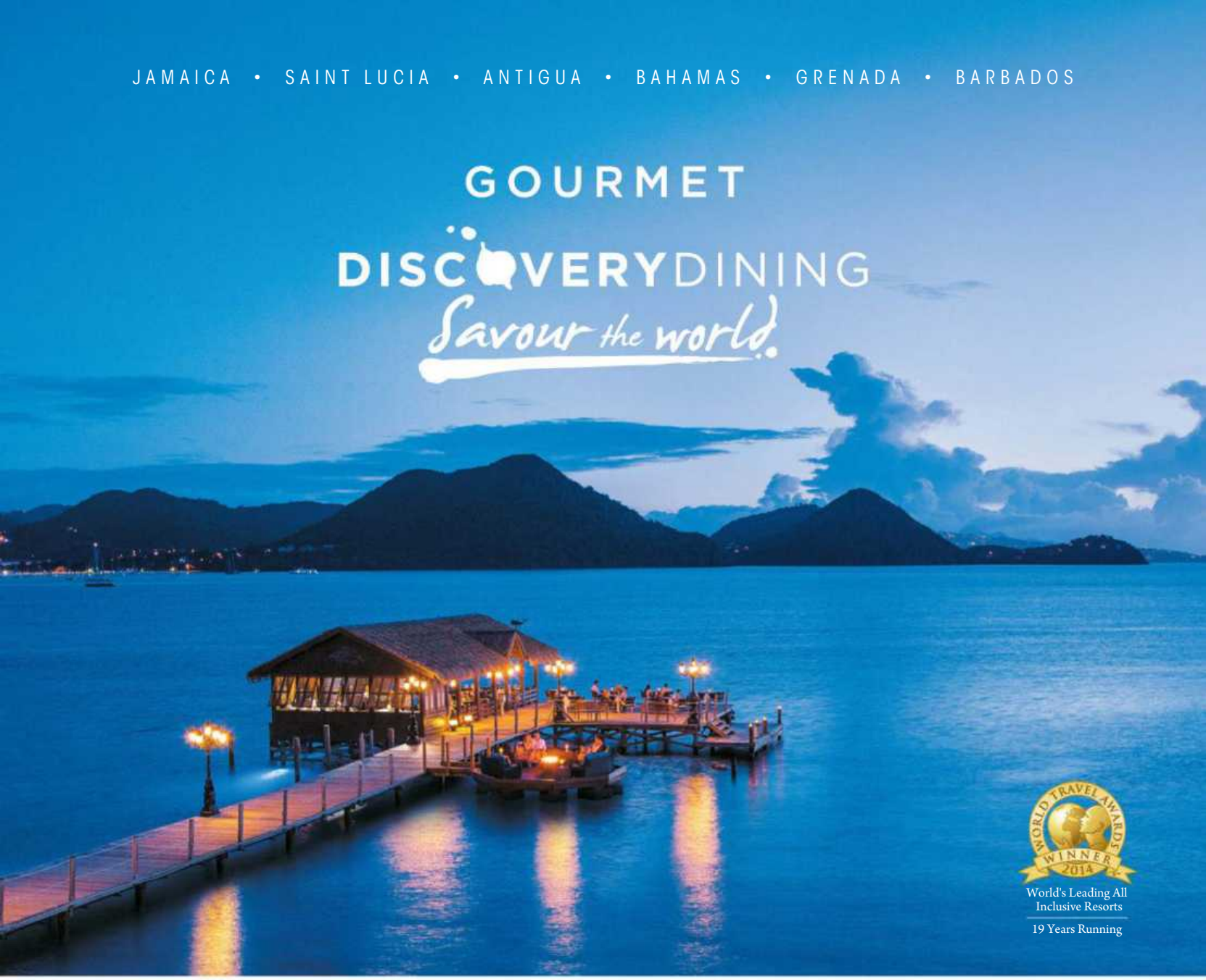


Trainers, £300, **Tod's** (www.harrods.com). Silk pocket square, £75, **Etro** (www.mrporter.com)

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AMERICAN BEAUTY

Carolyn Murphy, American model and women's design director of Detroit-based design brand Shinola, gives us the lowdown on what's hot and happening in the city

Shinola aptly put its roots down in Detroit, once one of the world's most significant cities in industry. Since its inception in 2011, it has expanded its quality product repertoire from beautiful hand-assembled watches to bicycles and luxury leather goods. This all-American company is committed to local craftspeople and artisans and dedicated to inspiring the revival of American-based manufacturing. We talk shop with Carolyn Murphy.

2

The Neighbourhoods



HOW HAS THE CITY CHANGED SINCE 2005?

Detroit has transformed, slowly but surely. There is a real vested interest in business, community, art, education and manufacturing – so you can see all of these little pockets coming back to life.

DETROIT IS UNDERGOING A REAL REGENERATION. WHICH AREAS HAVE PEAKED YOUR INTEREST LATELY?

I was super-impressed with Belle Isle as the park was thriving with people enjoying nature and the outdoors. And nearby in West Village, there have been a number of new businesses opening up adding to its walkability. Detroit's Eastern Market is also continuing to grow and evolve in really fantastic ways.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CITY SPOT AND WHY?

I'm partial to Midtown, the area surrounding our Shinola store, because I feel like it's a nucleus of inspiration and community. There is a real sense of neighbourhood among the local business owners and residents.

THERE HAS BEEN AN INFLUX OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND A REAL ENERGY RETURN TO DETROIT. WHAT KIND OF PROFESSIONALS IS THE CITY ATTRACTING?

I think the city is attracting entrepreneurs in every sector of business: product, food, education, art and music. When you have a creative college and university nearby, and a strong community of locals and businesses sprouting up all over, I think it's safe to say that we've only just seen the beginning of this revival in the spirit of innovation in America.

WHAT'S THE CURRENT VIBE LIKE?

Alive!

ANY INSIDER TIPS ON RECENT OPENINGS?

Willys has reopened with a new look and I love that it supports American designers in apparel. Carhartt and John Varvatos are other recently opened favourites.

SHINOLA PUT ITS ROOTS DOWN IN DETROIT AND IS SET ON RE-ESTABLISHING CRAFTSMANSHIP WITHIN AMERICA. HAS IT INSPIRED OTHERS TO DO THE SAME?

Shinola has absolutely inspired other businesses to manufacture in America, and to take responsibility in that supply chain.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR JOB WITH SHINOLA?

What I love most, besides the beautiful products, is the feeling I get when visiting our Detroit factory. Every team member has a sense of pride, purpose and belonging.

WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR DESIGNS?

There are so many influences from nature and music to art and fashion: but what inspires me most are people and their stories – the collaboration of our Shinola team and people out in the community. Everyone has a nostalgic reference point, whether that be a person, place or thing and we all contribute.

HOW DO YOU SEE DETROIT IN 10 YEARS TIME?

I see Detroit flourishing. I see it being an epicentre of industry and innovation, education and growth that supports America as a whole.

PRODUCT WATCH



1. RUNWELL CHRONO 41MM, £690
2. ESSEX LEATHER LARGE TOTE, £855
3. BRAKEMAN 40MM WITH TEXTURED-LEATHER STRAP, £540 4. LEATHER ENVELOPE FOR IPAD MINI, £125 5. LEATHER MEDIUM SHOPPER TOTE, £515. ALL AT SHINOLA.CO.UK

WHERE TO LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

EAT fresh food at **Selden Standard**; fill up on eclectic American dishes at **1917 American Bistro**; book into **Wright & Company** for small creative dishes; enjoy long, lazy lunches at the quirky **Gold Cash Gold** or head to **La Dolce Vita** for authentic Italian.

DRINK into the early hours at the laidback **Bronx Bar** with its super-duper jukebox; enjoy craft beer and cocktails at **Sugar House** and get your caffeine fix at the oh-so-cosy **Astro Coffee** or in our store at **Commonwealth Coffee.**

SHOP the vast **Detroit Antique Mall**; unearth vintage treasures at **Royal Oak Flea Market**; drop into the non-profit **Pewabic Pottery** and don't miss **Willys Detroit** for dozens of designer brands.

LISTEN to live music at the **Old Miami** for underground sounds or hang loose at **PJ's Lager House**; for jazz and blues head to **Baker's Keyboard Lounge** or **The Raven Lounge,** Michigan's oldest blues bar.

SLEEP at **The Inn on Ferry Street** in Midtown; bag a bed downtown at **The Westin Book Cadillac** or check into Corktown's design-led **Honor & Folly.**

Shinola watches all have a **limited lifetime guarantee.** Check out the beautiful **Runwell Collection** and the intricate works of art of the **Brakeman Collection.** Shinola's timeless **bags and accessories** range from **drawstring duffle bags** and **large totes** to **wallets, diaries** and **iPad covers.** And watch this space because there's always something else on the **Shinola** horizon...


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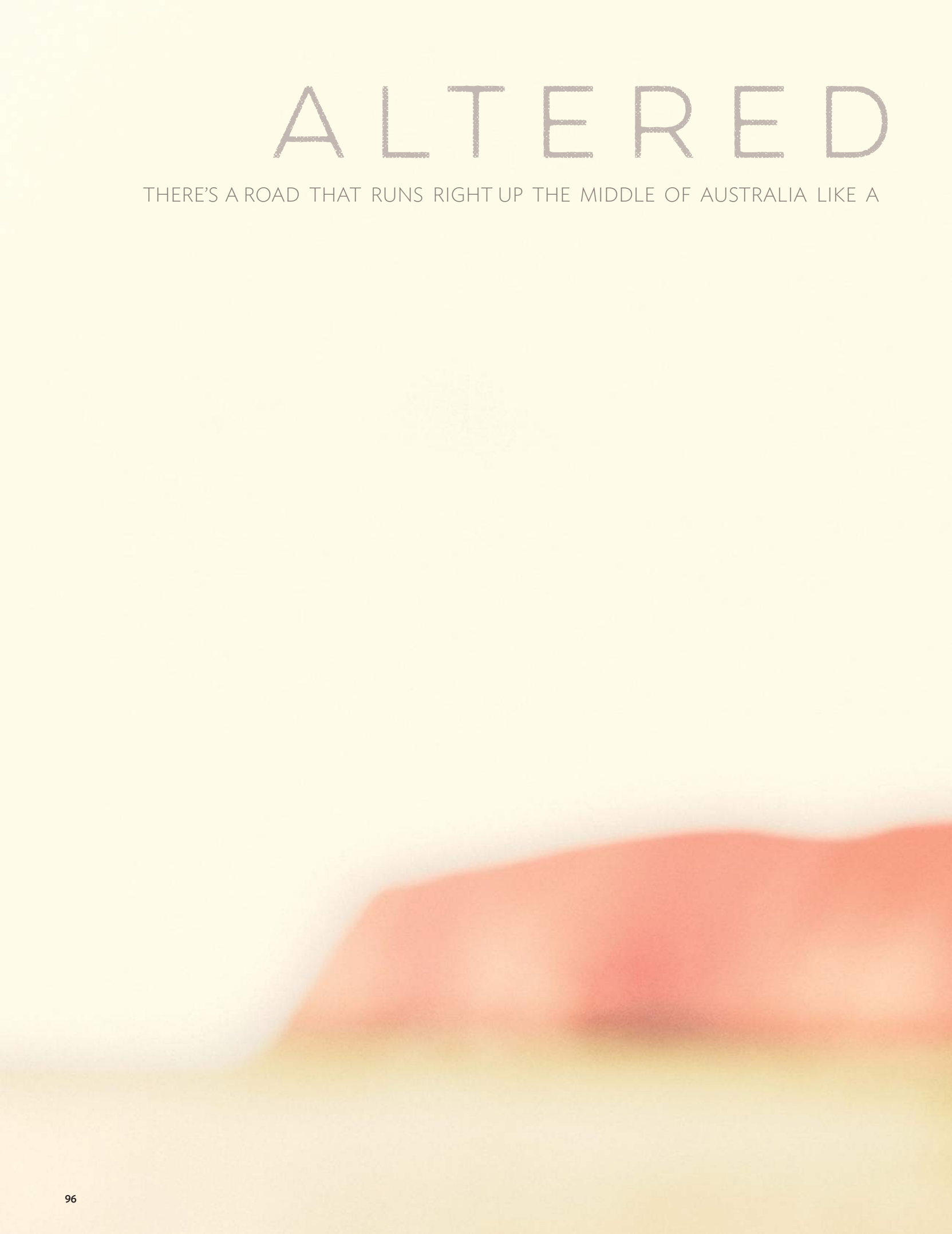
In our increasingly connected world, why is it that in our downtime we strive to get further and further away from it? Off-grid cabins, wild camping, digital detoxes and silent retreats: the method might vary but they all lead towards the same goal of blissful solitude. Of course, this sort of escape is nothing new. Hermits and monks have been shutting themselves off for millennia. Even recently there have been some extreme examples: the man who walked into the Maine woods aged 19 and didn't come out until his makeshift house was discovered 28 years later, or Japan's *hikikomori*, a lost generation of (mostly) young men holed up in their bedrooms. For most though, isolation is a temporary escape rather than a permanent lifestyle choice. Curiously, 'digital detox' and the internet affliction of 'FOMO' (fear of missing out) were both added to the Oxford English Dictionary online in 2013. The former is the perfect remedy for the latter, whether prescribed by geography (in the mobile-phone blackspot of Mongolia, say) or by the flick of a switch in Baden-Baden spa hotel Villa Stéphanie's new copper-lined bedrooms, which can block out Wi-Fi signals. But mostly the fashion is for monastic simplicity, such as the rustically beautiful Eremito in Umbria where whitewashed bedrooms are made just for one and dinner is taken in candlelit silence. Taking place deep in the California or North Carolina forest, Camp Grounded is aimed squarely at the tech-generation with the mantra 'disconnect to reconnect', swapping smartphones for mindfulness sessions and analogue arts workshops (typewriters, charcoal drawing). The founder of video-sharing site Vimeo, Zach Klein, created cult website *Cabin Porn* (now a book), which gathers together all manner of back-to-nature shelters, from stone huts in Norway to wooden A-frames in British Columbia, and positions them as an aspirational luxury. But you don't need to build yourself a cabin to escape the modern world. Wild camping will give the same remote thrills – whether on a Hebridean beach or in the Australian outback – with only a tent required. Leaving you alone again, naturally. FIONA KERR



PHOTOGRAPH: **FORD YATES**

ALTERED

THERE'S A ROAD THAT RUNS RIGHT UP THE MIDDLE OF AUSTRALIA LIKE A



STATES

ZIPPER. MAX ANDERSON TAKES IT. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALISTAIR TAYLOR-YOUNG



AUSTRALIANS VENERATE John McDouall Stuart as the nation's greatest explorer. Hard-bitten and hard-drinking, he took six attempts to make the journey from his sponsor's mansion in Adelaide to a crocodile-infested coast 3,400km to the north. In 2015, 200 years after his birth, there's still only one road up the middle of this vast island continent. It's the Stuart Highway or it's no way.

I'm cutting through, from bottom to top, steered by Stuart's achievement and inspired to make a few tracks of my own. It's a long, dirty trip, but if it gets too dirty, well, I'll just sit and watch the olours shifting around me – the Tuscan tones of sea and vine, the blood-and-ochre palette of the desert, the tree-frog greens of the tropical north.

I have some qualms. But at least I have a Toyota Land Cruiser with a fridge. Stuart had a horse called Polly. When he finally reached Point Stuart in July 1862, he fell silent before the Timor Sea. Perhaps overcome at having made it, he was certainly overcome by the time he got back to Adelaide. His expedition party was lauded after the 11-month trek, but the taciturn leader, crippled by scurvy, stomach ulceration and a smashed hand, was a shell of a man, incapable of speaking before a crowd. He quickly faded from view, and the South Australian governor declared him unfit for a knighthood, owing to his 'intemperance'. Four years after his crossing, Stuart died in London, aged 50. Seven people attended his funeral.

0 KM

Dawn rises on the beatific Gulf St Vincent beside Adelaide's beach suburb of Glenelg. 'Gonna be 40 today,' says the barista in the hipster breakfast bar. She's right. Where I'm going, it'll be 40 degrees every day for two weeks.

When my odometer moves off zero, the beachfront belongs to joggers, but the sands will soon dot with people seeking Saturday sea breezes – a pointillist portrait of prosperity, egalitarianism and cool.

South Australia, unlike other Australian states, wasn't a dumping ground for criminals. It was a business proposition: sell land then use the money to ship out willing émigrés. And it worked. After 100km I'm in the Clare Valley, a pastoral region born of Old World skills and New World determination – pretty stone hamlets in vales of eucalyptus, golden paddocks of wheat, blankets of grape.

In the town of Auburn I take a break at a little timber railway station that has been converted into a tasting room for Mount Horrocks winery. 'Would



AERIAL VIEW OF THE FLINDERS RANGES, MOUNTAINS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA . *OPENING*



SPREAD: THE SHIMMERING SILHOUETTE OF ULURU. *OVERLEAF*: THE DESERTSCAPE AROUND LAKE EYRE AFTER A RARE DELUGE



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OUTBACK EUCALYPTUS NEAR ULURU, WHICH ACCORDING TO THE ANANGU PEOPLE WAS CREATED DURING THE DREAMTIME BY SPIRIT BEINGS



you like to try the Riesling?' asks the bartender. 'I know it's early in the morning, but, hey…'

'Sure,' I say. Stuart, at least, would approve.

525KM

The Flinders Ranges are mountains made weary over 800 million years. They rise in late-afternoon sunshine, red as a carcass – ribs, scapulas, a great sternum of quartzite called Wilpena Pound.

Arkaba Homestead is a mote of whitewashed stone at the foot of the range. In 1858 Stuart arrived here so depleted by his first expedition that 'his voice was all that was left of him'. Now a luxury lodge and conservancy, Arkaba is working to undo Stuart's legacy.

'We removed the last sheep in 2013,' says guide Kat Mee as we tour creek lines on the 63,000-acre property. Evening light falls across mobs of kangaroos grazing beneath 500-year-old gums. 'I was shocked how quickly native plants returned. In two months we could see the difference.'

Early settler-pastoralists fenced out the dingos and pumped water. Grateful rabbits, foxes and cats flourished, eating everything in sight. Over a dinner lit by candles and stars, I'm told Australia loses 65 million native animals to feral cats *a night*.

Native animals weren't the only victims here. Adnyamathanha, Pirlatap, Yardliyawarra, Ngadjuri, Nukunu, Pankarla, Kuyani: these were the Aboriginal peoples of the Flinders Ranges before wire fences, Christian missionaries, whitefella food and disease put paid to their connections with land, ancestors and each other.

834KM

In the desolate railhead of Marree, Max Dadleh props up the bar of the Great Northern Hotel. He's 76 and has a lazy-lizard Aussie drawl, but there's no Anglo and little Saxon in his colouring. 'My grandfather was a cameleer,' he says. 'He came from Baluchistan, which is now Pakistan. People called them Afghans, but the cameleers were from all over. My father was the last of them.'

Camels, better suited to desert conditions than horses or bullocks, worked the outback well into the 20th century. As a boy Max watched his father piling them with supplies before leading them into the wilderness on 500km deliveries. Marree was home to Australia's first mosque, built in 1861 – a crude thatch on tree stumps facing Mecca.

'Did your father retain much of his culture?' I ask.

'Some of it. But he'd finished with the prayin'.' He pauses. 'I'd have prayed. Specially out in the desert with temperatures around 50 degrees.'

1,011KM

I exit the highway and take the Oodnadatta Track, 600km of dirt road. Dragging a flume of dust, I cleave 'gibber' plains – scaly, scrubby expanses



broken by escarpments coloured like peaches and cream. I cross creeks lined with gum trees and awash only with sand.

At the edge of Kati Thanda, or Lake Eyre, I wince at the heat, flies and 10,000 square kilometres of salt crust. 'All who have travelled there have felt this haunting sense of desolation and death,' wrote explorer and geologist Cecil Madigan in 1939.

And yet.

At Coward Springs, off the lake's southern tip, I sink into a crude timber bath in wetlands alive with birds. The waters emanate from the Great Artesian Basin, the planet's largest and deepest such aquifer. Out in the gibber I stand atop 'mound springs', bizarre house-sized blisters that weep water. Elated by their crown of lush grasses, I throw caution to the hot wind and swallow a mouthful of water, a sweet two-million-year-old vintage.

This land corridor with its secret waters opened a passage north through the salt lakes. Aboriginal people had used it for millennia, bringing sacred ochre from the Flinders Ranges – the oldest trade route on earth.

Stuart relied on the waters. So did cattle drovers, hard on his heels. There was water for desert repeater stations. In 1871 lonely telegraphers began relaying messages via 36,000 wire-strung poles to Port Darwin, thence to London. And there was water for steam trains. In the 1880s and 90s the Europeans laid tracks through the ochre route to make railheads at Marree and Oodnadatta. The rail line, however, constantly crippled by heat and flash floods, was finally relocated in the 1970s. Today both towns use old rolling stock as civic monuments, attempts that are as noble as they are forlorn.

1,230 KM

It's nearly dark when I check into the empty Transcontinental Hotel in Oodnadatta. The manager shows me to a room, lifting the skirts of a tired divan to peer beneath. 'Just checkin',' he says. 'Had a couple of eastern browns in here earlier.'

Putting aside fears of the world's second-most-venomous snake, I ask when the kitchen closes.

'We don't really have a kitchen. But I've just cooked my dinner – it's pretty basic but y'welcome to half of that?'

He won't take money for the pork chops, so we sit eating while he points out bullet holes in the bar-room.

'One of 'em's quite recent,' he says brightly.

1,875 KM

'In all of Stuart's expeditions, not a single life was lost,' reads a panel at the South Australia-Northern Territory border. Scored beneath it by hand: 'Unless you count the Aboriginal people he and his men killed at Attack Creek.'

I break west of Stuart's trail on a 750km detour to visit two very different rocks in the bruised heart of Australia.

Curtin Springs is a million-acre cattle station with well-manicured accommodation, campsites and meals served after a triangle is struck. In a bar papered with

FROM LEFT: THE SALTY SHORELINE OF KATI THANDA–LAKE EYRE; THE BIODIVERSE KAKADU NATIONAL PARK, EAST OF DARWIN.



us-against-the-world humour, I find a tiny old man holding court, delighting a group of Canadians with his brazen politics and off-colour jokes. Selfies are taken.

'Are you,' I ask, shocked, having thought the cattle-station owner dead, 'Peter Severin?'

'I am,' he says, meeting me with one good eye and a grip of iron. 'And who might you be?'

Severin is 87. He talks, I listen. Bitter polemics sweetened with punchlines. After developing the station in the 1950s he began helping tourists visit what was then called Ayers Rock. In 1963 he hammered pickets into its back, linked by 800 metres of chain so people could climb it.

In the 1990s the local Anangu people began asking tourists not to climb. Half of Australia still respects this, half says to hell with them. 'Your chain divides the nation,' I dare to venture.

'Yes, it does,' says Severin. 'But only the whites.'

His 61-year-old son Ashley is just as steely, forged by an outback cattleman's demons: drought, bushfire, fluctuating commodity prices, governments taking sides. He shows me Mount Conner, a spectacular drum-shaped tor on the property. 'When life gets too much, I bring my swag here,' he says. 'And I feel this big.' He proffers his thumb and forefinger before the 300-metre edifice to show a millimetre-wide gap. There are no known Aboriginal stories about Mount Conner, but there are Severin stories. Ash's son is buried there.

1,963KM

Just 150km away – next door – is that other rock, Uluru.

'We have a very fine Barossa Shiraz to go with the beef backstrap. The Tasmanian Pinot is also excellent.'

After a week of hard driving and pit-stop rudiments, this sounds like a foreign language. White tablecloths, uniformed staff, potpourris of bush herbs and polished timber. So willingly do I surrender to the ministrations at tented-camp Longitude 131° that I end up completely pissed by 3pm.

Here, precocious engineering has reimagined the tent so guests can recline on a dune of pillows and watch Uluru change colour under the sun's fearsome transit. The rock is beautiful but also raw, even unnerving. Its ferrous skin and mouth-like rents have me thinking of Francis Bacon's work.

Its 10km perimeter, however, is a benign path of shady havens, cool waterholes and caves of Anangu art. I stand, swaying slightly, while a sweet young ranger does her damnedest to help visitors penetrate concepts that are complex, mostly secret and increasingly lost. Perhaps it's the Shiraz, but I think I get it. The rock, the local Anangu people, the ranger and even Longitude 131° – they're an optic through which non-Aboriginal people can glimpse a continent before Captain Cook, a continent where more than 250 separate nations lived and hunted and traded.

OVERLEAF: THE ROCKY KNUCKLES OF ULURU'S NEAR NEIGHBOUR KATA TJUTA, ALSO KNOWN AS THE OLGAS

I THROW CAUTION TO THE HOT WIND AND SWALLOW A



MOUTHFUL OF WATER, A SWEET TWO-MILLION-YEAR-OLD VINTAGE





2,315KM

The 500km Mereenie Loop follows the base of the Western MacDonnells on a ribbon of excoriated earth. I am thoroughly alone except for these low ranges. I stop at a valley and climb to sit looking over a vista that is lime-coloured and sensual, and the truth is I don't quite know what to do with myself, so isolated am I. Then something strange happens. The earth breathes a fragrant sigh as rain begins to fall in warm sobs.

2,490KM

Glen Helen Station charges me about £15 for a room comprising a fan, a bunk-bed and a tin of insect repellent. At 6am I walk 100 metres to swim in a gorge of pyjama-striped rock. The water is as glossy as a sheet of onyx that reflects clouds and keening eagles. This is the Finke River. When it flows, it follows a 100-million-year-old watercourse, the world's oldest.

2,907KM

Barrow Creek, population 11. A man emerges from the shack-like pub. He's bigger in the waist and coarser in the face, but there's no mistaking him.

'Les!' I exclaim.

He's as surprised as I am, but doesn't remember that I interviewed him 15 years ago. Les Hiddins was an army major when he lost his hearing in a rugby game. Fearful of ending up behind a desk, he went bush to compile an inventory of survival food. The ABC television network discovered him, called him *The Bush Tucker Man* and created a TV phenomenon.

'Barrow Creek,' laughs the publican. 'Didn't you know it's the centre of the universe?'

3,163KM

Threeways Roadhouse. Tired truck drivers. Sour waitresses. One guy's Kenilworth rig is loaded with four wagons of copper ore weighing 200 tonnes.

'Did a short run today,' he tells me.

'How short is short?'

'Aww, 650km. I usually do eleven hundred.'

3,389KM

At Elliott, beyond the Tropic of Capricorn, the humidity is ferocious. I engage four-wheel drive, and leave the highway to reach a lake that had Stuart's party rejoicing. 'The track's wet,' says a local, 'but you'll be OK.'

I ford a series of deep red pools within a narrow track of mush, but after 8km the Land Cruiser's wheels sound the inevitable note. Frantically digging at mud and tearing grasses to make traction mats, I become aware that I smell unusually bad. It's the stink of panic.

LEFT, KAKADU NATIONAL PARK. ACCORDING TO ABORIGINAL STORIES, ITS LANDSCAPE WAS CREATED BY AN EARTH MOTHER WHO



3,740KM

The thermal pools in Mataranka are surrounded by great whorls of rainforest, strung overhead with industrial-sized webs of Golden Orb spiders. When the heavens release a torpid drench, the pale pool puckers and the webs shake, and I have a sick feeling in my stomach.

Point Stuart is, I am aware, at the end of a deep and difficult bush track that cuts through dangerous wetlands. No question, it's going to be flooded. 'Not enough rain,' I mutter into my beer bottle. 'Too much rain.'

4,329KM

Bamurru Plains is a luxury lodge beside Kakadu National Park, east of Darwin. It sits on a 74,000-acre farm called Swim Creek – possibly named in irony, given the farmer routinely loses half-tonne buffaloes to three-quarter-tonne crocodiles. At its northern tip is the place where Stuart, on 24 July 1862, fell speechless at the sight of ocean.

As feared, the road is flooded, so lodge manager John Cooper – no mean bushman – tries to skim me over the wetlands to Point Stuart in an airboat. This raucous beast of a thing usually scuds well-heeled guests out to see sunken paperbark forests, muddy lairs of big crocs and lily fields fished by statuesque jabiru storks.

We fly at breathtaking speed – until we're pulled up hard by mud. John kills the engine. Semi-submerged buffaloes watch suspiciously through veils of mosquitoes.

'There,' says John. 'Point Stuart.' A seam of mangrove marks where Australia meets the Timor Sea.

'How far?' I ask as a bulging thunderhead leaks a little lightning.

'About three kilometres.'

I force a laugh. 'I've driven 4,300km to get here and I'm going to fall short by three kilometres?'

The floodplain is flooded, but not flooded enough. So we sit in silence and watch the clouds dropping silver bolts on the emerald horizon. It's been 150 years since Stuart used superhuman fortitude to breach inhuman distance, but this continent is still far from being tamed.

'Australia's said no, right?'

John smiles. 'Australia's said no.'

OUTBACK AND BEYOND

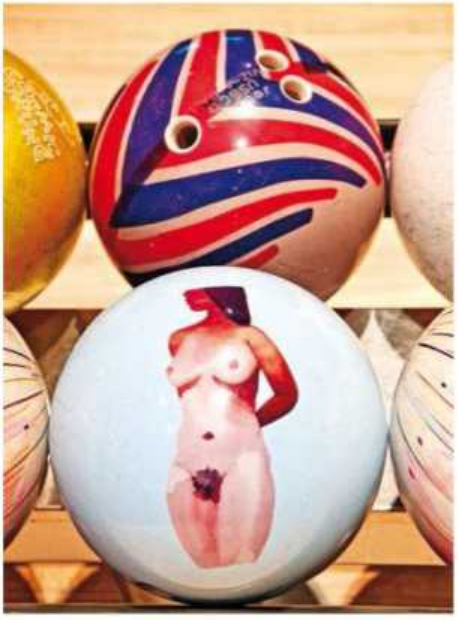
Scott Dunn (+44 20 8682 5060; www.scottdunn.com) offers eight-day trips from Adelaide to the Top End from £9,450 per person, including flights, private transfers, excursions and stays at Arkaba or Rawnsley Park Station, Longitude 131° and Bamurru Plains. Scott Dunn can also arrange bespoke trips, with prices from £5,800 per person, including international flights, transfers, experiences, the services of professional guides from SEIT Outback Australia and scenic flights with Chinta Air Tours. For more information on South Australia and the Northern Territory, visit www.southaustralia.com and www.australiasouthback.co.uk.

THEN RESTED AND TURNED HERSELF INTO A LARGE ROCK. *ABOVE*, HILLSIDE CONTOURS IN THE SPRAWLING FLINDERS RANGES






DRYGOODS






GHANA
XURAKI









THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO BOOM

NOT SINCE THE FLURRY OF BUILDING IN HONG KONG IN THE 1980S HAS THERE BEEN SUCH AN ELECTRIFYING SHAKE-UP OF A CITY. MIAMI NOW HAS ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOODS CREATED FROM THE GROUND UP AND A CLUSTER BOMB OF STARCHITECTS PULLING THEIR MOST AUDACIOUS MOVES. OFF THE BACK OF THAT, SAYS LOCAL NICHOLAS GRIFFIN, THE NEW HOTEL SCENE IS AS FRENZIED AS FEEDING TIME IN THE WILD. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW BUCK











If you were born in Europe, or much of the USA, it's hard to see a palm tree and not assume you're on holiday. Not short of a few tropical fronds, Miami was long a destination where money and people passed through quickly – hopping on cruises, down for the weekend. But now it's up to something new: it wants you to stay. It wants you to stay for a week or two. It wants you to stay for good. And there are plenty of reasons why people are listening.

Once upon a short time ago, Miami Beach was 'where neon went to die', according to the acerbic American comedian Lenny Bruce. The 1950s heyday of Sinatra and Monroe was superseded by the age of cheap flights to the Caribbean and the conversion of some Orlando cattle pastures into a place called Walt Disney World. Tourists in Miami disappeared. Construction stopped. And then it got worse. Someone said 'Miami', you said 'Vice'. The iconic TV show of hazy sunsets, dirty cops and dope was based on a raw truth. Fragile Miami was eaten from the inside out by the early 1980s: the perfect gateway for South American drugs to make their way towards northern consumers. The only glamour left by the time I moved to the USA in 1989 was a crumbling Art Deco district, an ageing population and Miami Beach's famous southern tip – by then about as crime-ridden a neighbourhood as existed in all of the country.

It's unrecognisable now. Buildings on South of Fifth Street command the best views and prices in town. Cranes cut the sky and restaurants seem to open weekly. Historically a boom-and-bust city, Miami used to lie down and play dead after a crash. But in 2008, it responded to the financial crisis by rewarding itself with new museums, a stadium, the New World Symphony space designed by Frank Gehry and countless office towers. Art Basel Miami Beach – which launched in December 2002 and before the decade was out had become a fixture on the global art calendar – was the beacon that showed the place was capable of attracting a regular well-heeled clientele. And proof that Miami wasn't so cultureless after all.

Perhaps it was Art Basel-inspired, but now there's another evolution going on. The buildings of Miami Beach, so many still awkward and downtrodden, are being turned into works of art themselves. The names attached to the new skyline attest to the accompanying ambition. Within a two-year period, Pritzker Architecture Prize winners Rem Koolhaas, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Richard Meier and Herzog & de Meuron will all have completed projects.

The man with the most ambition of all is arguably Alan Faena. While others are constructing hotels or apartments, the Argentine developer is creating a whole neighbourhood: the Faena District. Yes, there's a hotel (Faena Hotel Miami Beach, doubles from about £490) but that's merely one of several architectural statements in its six-block radius. It's as if when Soho House opened in London all of Soho was attached.

This is not the first time Faena's worked such urban alchemy. For the original Faena District in his native Buenos Aires, he bought up a chunk of neglected Puerto Madero and transformed it into one of the city's brightest areas, with a hotel designed by Philippe Starck and an arts centre in a former flour mill.

His plans for Miami are even grander. He calls it 'a unique place, a utopian place where the best minds in the world have the freedom to brainstorm'. Faena has not

Clockwise from top left: artwork at Nautilus, a Sixty Hotel; Collins Avenue; graffiti by DALeast at The Wynwood Walls; Thompson Miami Beach's reception. *Opposite,* dining room at Casa Claridge's. *Previous pages left, clockwise from far left:* the Miami Design District; 1 Hotel South Beach; the manager of Marine Layer; graffiti in Wynwood; an armchair at 1 Hotel; Ocean Drive, South Beach; the 1 Hotel lobby; bowling balls at The Miami Beach Edition; lighting at Metropolitan by COMO. *Previous pages right,* Thompson Miami Beach









so much developed the project from afar as curated it with a handpicked team of collaborators. His version of Utopia lies on either side of Collins Avenue between 32nd and 35th Streets of Mid-Beach, one half running towards the Atlantic Ocean, the other spreading back to the waters of Indian Creek. The beachfront is Norman Foster's domain with Faena House, a residential tower with sharp wrap-around terraces and a £40 million penthouse. Yards away is Rem Koolhaas's stunning Faena Forum arts centre, due to open next year. From the outside it's a dazzling white drum and cube, pierced with tall windows. Inside, it's a flexible version of the Pantheon, able to shift walls to host exhibitions, concerts and even political debates.

But it's for the Faena Miami Beach Hotel that Faena has partnered with his most surprising collaborators of all: Academy Award perennials Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin. *The Great Gatsby* director and his production-designer wife have transformed the former Saxony Hotel into a 169-room cinematic fantasy. The property even has its own Art Deco theatre, which with Faena's A-lister caché is sure to attract only the best names. One of the restaurants will be overseen by Francis Mallmann. French trained, the Argentine chef returned to his roots and made his name cooking the best meat in a steak-obsessed country. Faena simply calls him 'my ambassador of fire'. And across the street is the district's second hotel, the funky Casa Claridge's (doubles from about £260), all pink orchids, leafy courtyard and eye-popping art installations.

Faena is not alone in backing Miami Beach right now, and if you want a real vote of confidence, ask a New Yorker. Ian Schrager, the most New York of New Yorkers, thinks the city is going through 'a paradigm shift'. The famed hotelier and Studio 54 front man should know: he saw the last upsurge before anyone else. Back in 1992 Schrager took a small bet that paid off hugely, launching the Delano (doubles from about £590), which in turn launched a thousand imitations. Boutiquey, design-led and both elegant and casual, it was the first new hotel to open on Miami Beach in almost 40 years. It gave the good-looking crowd a place to rest up during the day, ready for the long nights in Miami's eternally effervescent club scene. Thanks to Schrager, the lobby went from a space to stow your luggage to the see-and-be-seen cocktail spot framed by breezy curtains and deep sofas.

Two decades later, Schrager is back on Miami Beach with another hotel and his year-old Miami Beach Edition (doubles from about £285) is the perfect metaphor for the most recent surge. It's rebuilt rather than built, sitting inside the skeleton of the Seville, one of the giant 1950s hotels from an age when ladies in fur stoles put their kids to bed before heading out to

'THIS IS A UNIQUE PLACE, A UTOPIAN PLACE WHERE THE WORLD'S BEST MINDS HAVE FREEDOM TO BRAINSTORM'

hear Dean Martin croon. There are nods to the past (the sleek, red Matador Bar breathes new life into its original curves) and a connection to the city's heritage (the music is put together by Miami-born DJ Jauretsi, who rescued records from her parents' Cuban restaurant to create a soundscape that's never far from Havana), but only in 2015's age of one-upmanship could it go as far as lowering the beach boardwalk so the bar has uninterrupted ocean views.

Miami Beach hotels are often as much about after midnight as before it. For before, there's Jean-Georges Vongerichten's revival of the original Seville restaurant, the Matador Room, with a sunken seating area and a light, refined Latin menu. After the clock strikes 12, slink down to the basement, where there's a skating rink and bowling

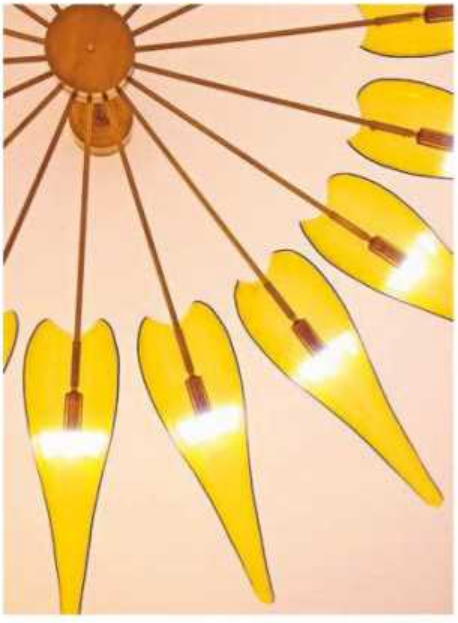
Clockwise from top left: neon signs on Collins Avenue; the lobby at Thompson Miami Beach; 'Twin Palm Island' by Yto Barrada at Pérez Art Museum Miami; the bar at Nautilus hotel. *Opposite,* the pool at The Miami Beach Edition























alley, alongside the prerequisite nightclub. Neon and wood merge seamlessly and every detail, down to the bowling balls painted with nudes commissioned by artists in New York and Los Angeles, is beautifully thought-out.

The Edition is a wonderful mixture of showiness and subtlety. It's sly, decadent and amusing. Even its beach is a little bit of honesty, a little bit of artifice: close to a million dollars worth of rocks were shipped in to form a minor breakwater so guests can still swim on a rough day.

Just south of the Edition is a hidden walkway, set between the hotels and the beach boardwalk. Easy to miss, it runs half a mile south towards the Metropolitan by COMO (doubles from about £135). If most Miami Beach hotels tend to chest-beat, this is a small, cool oasis. You won't find a DJ playing by the pool, although during Miami's Ultra Music Festival in March you'll see plenty of turntablers staying here, soaking up the peace and quiet and impeccable service. The sense of serenity is summed up by the relaxation pool on the roof. The rooms, too, have a cool mood, mixing mint-green walls, monochrome floors and frosted mirrors.

Above, view from The Standard. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* the pool at the Edition; seating at Thompson Miami Beach; an ornament at Casa Claridge's; artwork at the Thompson; furnishings at the hotel; Pérez Art Museum Miami; minibar at Nautilus; original light fitting at the hotel; a suite at Nautilus

The Metropolitan may be all about restraint, but it's an attribute that has long been in short supply in Miami Beach, where

AT ONE BEACH $1 MILLION WORTH OF ROCKS WERE SHIPPED IN SO GUESTS COULD STILL SWIM ON A ROUGH DAY

you can check into a five-star hotel wearing nothing more than a thong. People tend to think of Miami Beach and Miami as one and the same, but in fact they're two separate cities divided by four bridges. Miami Beach was incorporated 100 years ago. Having failed as a coconut and avocado plantation, this glorified sandbar soon found its natural calling as a holiday destination with an early string of small hotels. Within a decade, the rapidly growing city received its first presidential visit: Warren Harding on vacation in 1921. In what was already becoming the regular Miami Beach overkill, he was given a special caddy for his first round of golf: a three-ton elephant called Rosie.

To this day, Miami Beach hotels will try to give something different for your dollar. Next to the Metropolitan sits the 1 Hotel South Beach (doubles from about £345), the town's first eco place to stay. It's big (426 rooms) but pulls off the legerdemain of intimacy and takes its commitment to the environment seriously (it's about to be declared a LEED-certified building). The white, high-ceilinged lobby may now be a familiar Miami trope, but instead of acres of cut flowers, there is a living wall of 11,000 plants. Beyond the lobby the green initiatives continue: bedroom doors are unlocked with a reclaimed-wood keycard. On the bedside table is a chalkboard instead of a notepad, inside the wardrobe the hangers are made out of recycled paper and by the minibar there's a tap of fresh, filtered water. Miami Beach has always been about decadence and the 1 Hotel provides plenty of that too, with four swimming pools (including one on the 18th-floor rooftop), a fleet of Tesla



electric cars to ferry guests around and a soon-to-open 10,000 sq ft gym and spa.

A few blocks further south is another rebuild: Nautilus, a Sixty Hotel (doubles from about £130). Like the Edition, it plays with its origins, right down to the restored sea-blue neon sign, and there's a New Yorker behind it, Jason Pomeranc, who co-founded Thompson hotels. Now with his Sixty Hotels brand, he's restored this 1950s hotel created by architect Morris Lapidus, the man who reinvented Miami Beach style. Even today, this is still old-school Miami where your stay begins with a drink, as you're drawn through the lobby past the white columns, grand swirling staircases and curved walls to a gently arched wooden bar. There's a touch of *Mad Men* about the rooms too, such as the upended trunk that opens to reveal a minibar.

Thompson Miami Beach hotel (doubles from about £229) has made its mark on the area as well. Here three buildings have been stapled together to form a place to stay that's filled with colour and beats. By the pool is a venue called 1930s House,

EVEN THE CAR PARK BELOW THE HOTEL HAD TO BE CUT OUT OF THE LIMESTONE BY SCUBA DIVERS

which gives off a speakeasy vibe with its original scalloped roof and Spanish-tiled floor – just the spot for the first or last cocktail of the night. The Thompson was also smart enough to bring in celebrity chef Michelle Bernstein for the hotel's restaurant Seagrape, always packed out with a healthy mixture of guests and locals.

Miami and Miami Beach have always had their own distinct sense of self. Each has its own mayor and police department. Miami Beach has leaned hard on tourism, which sometimes obscures just how fast the rest of Miami has grown up.

The beach is an easy sell, but for the curious, Miami runs deep. There's Herzog & de Meuron's impeccable new museum, Pérez Art Museum Miami, named after Cuban-American billionaire Jorge Pérez who also donated a hefty amount of his own collection of 20th-century Latin American masterpieces. The art is on the street in Wynwood, just south of the Design District, where wall after wall is covered in commissioned graffiti, no matter whether it's a parking lot, shop or one of the ubiquitous galleries. It's Brooklyn a dozen years ago: for every block that reeks of neglect, the next offers stunning surprises, such as the organic loaves at Zak the Baker, cool bike store Orange Pedal, and Sprout, a florist-coffee shop. Some of the neighbouring factories that jut against the blue sky are now cooperatives such as the Bakehouse Art Complex. Other factories are, well, still factories.

There's no doubt that Miami today is a city in flux. One of the accusations often levelled against it is that it has no centre. That too is about to change: drive off the beach, past the port and the deep bellows of the departing cruise liners, and you'll arrive at Brickell City Centre. This new neighbourhood is being built from the ground up and, like the Faena District, has its own soon-to-open hotel, the glass tower of East (doubles from about £410).

If possible, it out does Alan Faena in both intention and price. The £690 million development is a mixture of hotel, shops, offices and apartments. Such a combination might be familiar in Hong Kong, where East's owners Swire Hotels regenerated Pacific Place around The Upper House, but it's new to Miami. There will be hanging gardens, parks and swimming pools. The top floors stare up and down Biscayne Bay with views only previously experienced by passing pods of pelicans. Even the car park below had to be cut out of the limestone rock by scuba divers. Running through the centre of it all is a stunning 'climate ribbon', a vast, glass, undulating trellis that lets the open-air second and third floors stay cool by harnessing the winds off the sea. Not only are the occasional tropical rains kept out, the water is saved for reuse. Tens of thousands of Miamians live in the surrounding area in Brickell and Downtown. Could this be it: the moment when Miami learns to walk instead of drive?

Throughout this frenzy of openings, you can sense the city's desire to be taken seriously rather than just as next year's hottest holiday destination. This time, the boom has reached further than hotels. A town that always had its own culture now has the buildings to host it and distinctive new neighbourhoods that simply didn't exist before. There's so much going on that observers are caught between rosy optimism and the feeling that this is almost too good to be true. Let the long-time watchers worry, for everyone else, Miami's moment is now.







From top: plant pots at 1 Hotel; curiosities and books at the Thompson; the hotel's retro design. *Opposite,* the sitting room at Casa Claridge's



FIERCE CREATURE

CONQUER THE WILDERNESS IN FEARLESS WARRIOR-GIRL LOOKS WITH AN ELEMENTAL EDGE.
STYLED BY HANNAH TEARE.
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIMA HOHLOV





Dress, £1,695, **Bally** (www.bally.co.uk). Socks, £28, **Hunter** (www.hunterboots.com). Haze boots, £675, **Jimmy Choo** (www.jimmychoo.com). Leather shoulder strap, leather and bone waist belt, all available to hire, **Angels Fancy Dress** (+44 20 7836 5678). *Opposite,* silk dress, £5,655, **Valentino** (www.valentino.com). Kuba tribal necklace, £240, **Pebble** (www.pebblelondon.com). Leather cuff and rope, both available to hire, **Angels Fancy Dress**, as before.

Previous page, top, £1,940, **Brunello Cucinelli** (www.brunellocucinelli.com). Emely leather trousers, £115, **Belstaff** (www.belstaff.co.uk). Faux-fur coat, £880, **Chalayan** (www.chalayan.com). Leather necklace, horn rope necklace and arm cuff, all available to hire, **Angels Fancy Dress**, as before. Wax cord in hair, from £2.95; plain cord, from £4.45 per metre, both **VV Rouleaux** (+44 20 7224 5179)





Above, mixed-material dress, £750, **Coach** (uk.coach.com). Faux-fur shrug, £390, **Helen Moore** (www.helenmoore.com). Embossed crocodile belt, £350, **Mulberry** (www.mulberry.com). Silk and stainless-steel necklace, £360, **En Inde** (www.eninde.com). Black cord worn on wrist, £2.95 per metre, **VV Rouleaux** (+44 20 7224 5179). *Right*, cashmere and silk mouliné dress, £2,725; silk-crêpe tank top, £1,039, both **Céline** (www.celine.com)





Leather laser-cut dress, £4,590, **Tod's** (www.net-a-porter.com). Metal, gold and crystal necklace, £351, **Kirsty Ward** (www.youngbritishdesigners.com). Taospueblo tribe bow and arrow set, £299, **Wilde Ones** (www.wildeones.com). *Opposite,* embroidered wool dress, £2,485, **Stella McCartney** (www.stellamccartney.com). Silver Tusk earrings, £225, **Shaun Leane** (www.shaunleane.com)

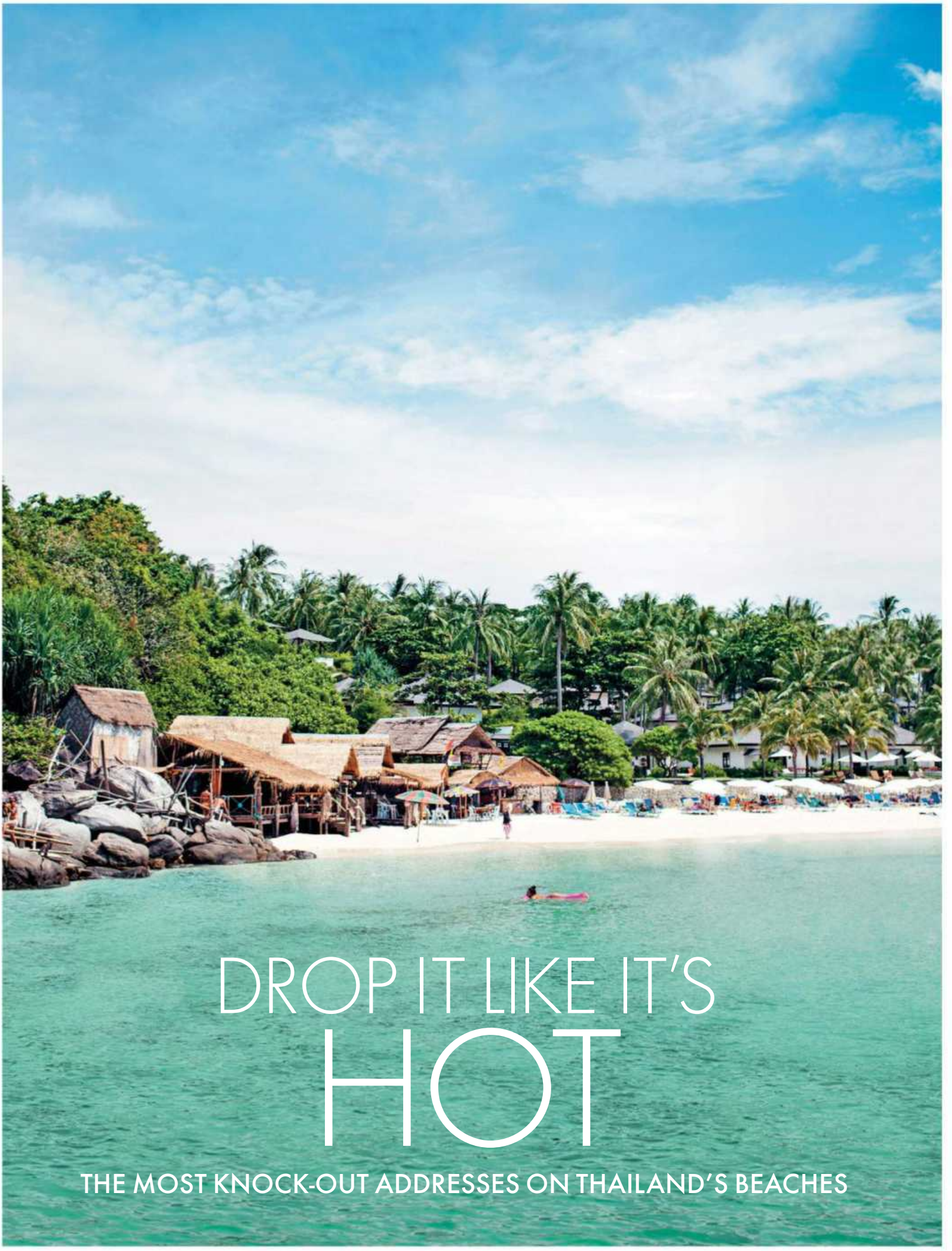




Embroidered leather dress, £5,745, **Louis Vuitton** (www.louisvuitton.co.uk). Silver tusk earrings, £225, **Shaun Leane** (www.shaunleane.com). Small Bullets nose ring, £30, **Maria Francesca Pepe** (www.mariafrancescapepe.com). Taospueblo tribe bow and arrow set, as before. *Opposite*, Lurex skirt, £1,230; mohair jacquard top, £650, both **Gucci** (www.gucci.com). Faux-fur shrug, £390, **Helen Moore** (www.helenmoore.com). Lancaster boots, £450, **House of Holland** (www.houseofholland.co.uk). On the boat: Gold Label box cape, £2,680, **Vivienne Westwood** (www.viviennewestwood.com). Mexican blanket, £39.99, **Wilde Ones** (as before). Avalon wool and cashmere blanket, £910, **Hermès** (uk.hermes.com). *This page and opposite*: leather, rope, horn and cord accessories, all available to hire, **Angels Fancy Dress** (+44 20 7836 5678). Wax cord in hair, from £2.95 per metre; plain cord in hair, from £4.45 per metre, both **VV Rouleaux** (+44 20 7224 5179)

Hair: **Nao Kawakami** using bumble and bumble. Make-up: **Akgun Manisali** using Chanel Christmas 2015 and Chanel Body Excellence. Model: **Nicola Haffmans** at Models 1. Photographed in Dalarö, Sweden. With thanks to Lola Carlander (www.casasthlm.com)





DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT

THE MOST KNOCK-OUT ADDRESSES ON THAILAND'S BEACHES



PHOTOGRAPHS: **ANAIS + DAX/AUGUST; CHRIS WISE**

Villa Siam at Iniala Beach House in Phuket. *Opposite*, the turquoise waters of Koh Racha Yai

BEST SPIRITUAL HIGH

Scattered through dense bird-filled jungle on the edge of a boulder-strewn beach, Thai wellness institution Kamalaya changed the spa scene when it opened 10 years ago. This results-driven holistic hotspot on the island of Koh Samui is built around an ancient monk's cave, and its therapists are some of the best in the world. Recharge your physical and emotional batteries on one of three different stress- and burnout-therapy programmes, which include invigorating yoga, Chinese acupuncture, Ayurvedic medicine and Thai massage. *www.kamalaya.com. Doubles from about £140*



BEST TREEHOUSES

All eyes are on Phuket this month, when the fantastical Keemala finally opens its recycled wooden doors. The hotel looks like a cross between *Avatar*'s Pandora and *The Hobbit*'s Middle-earth, and you can choose to stay in mushroom-shaped clay cottages, billowing tented suites, bird's-nest villas or bamboo houses looped into the palm trees like massive Christmas baubles. Vegetables in the restaurants will come straight from the kitchen gardens and fruit will be plucked from the surrounding orchards. The spa has therapies including vibrational attunement and Tibetan singing bowls. Expectations couldn't be higher. *www.keemala.com. Doubles from about £355*



BEST-SMELLING BOLTHOLE

Koh Samui meets colonial Indochina at The Scent Hotel on Bang Rak beach, where Provençal-style armchairs sit beside apothecary dressers. Choose your room fragrance on arrival. *www.thescenthotel.com. Doubles from about £65*

PHOTOGRAPH: **MARK LUSCOMBE-WHYTE**

BEST INTERIORS

Ella Phuket, *right*, in Patong Beach, is a temple to urban industrial minimalism with bare bulbs, polished concrete, iced mochas and guestrooms upstairs. At the opposite end of the style spectrum is China Inn Café in Phuket Town. A hundred years ago the shophouse was used as a money brokerage firm; now its beautifully restored rooms are filled with colourful textiles, lacquered antiques and vintage Chinese advertising posters, and there's a great courtyard restaurant. *www.theellagroup.org; China Inn (+66 76 356239)*

BEST PEOPLE-WATCHING

For some, a perfect evening in Thailand is a great cocktail and a mean green curry, preferably while wearing just flip-flops and a kaftan. But for others, it's a much more raucous event. The European-style beach clubs here include bottle service and a glammed-up crowd. At Koh Samui's Nikki Beach, for example, sushi, Champagne and international DJs are the draw (the more low-key Wednesday film nights are pretty popular too), and at Phuket's Catch Beach Club on Surin Beach (one of the island's better stetches of sand) the parties turn into a rave as the night goes on. *www.nikkibeach.com; www.catchbeachclub.com*

BEST SLICE OF HISTORY

Thai Hua Museum is one of the finest examples of Sino-Portuguese architecture in Phuket. Formerly a Chinese-language school, the building in the Old Town now holds exhibitions of local history, which is influenced by the Chinese diaspora who came to the island for tin mining. The displays are informative, using original artefacts as props and mini mock-ups to show what life was like in the 19th century. *+66 76 211224*





BEST NEW VILLAS

Koh Samui is heaving with heavyweight hotels – Banyan Tree, Four Seasons, W, Belmond Napasai – but giving them a run for their money are a new breed of houses to rent with vast amounts of space, spectacular design and privacy. Check out the modernist cubes of Samujana, *pictured*, cleaved into the hillside above Choeng Mon beach. Each comes with its own butlers, chefs, drivers and swimming pools, as well as Muay Thai boxers for personal training. Or try the Panacea's Praana Residence, which sprawls over 50,000sq ft and needs a staff of 20 to keep its six suites, cinema room, two infinity pools, gym, spa, nursery and nightclub ticking over. *www.samujana.com; www.panaceasamui.com*

BEST BOAT RIDE

Phang Nga Bay is hard to beat. Get here in a traditional longtail fishing boat to explore transparent waters, white-sand coves that are great for a lunch stop or a quick swim, and limestone islands that provide an epic setting (they featured in the 1974 James Bond film *The Man With The Golden Gun*: the fiendish Scaramanga was a resident in these parts).

BEST STREET FOOD

Blending Indian, Malaysian and Chinese influences, the food of southern Thailand is intense, hyper-fragrant and the spiciest of the country's already spicy regional cuisines. Get your fix in Phuket Old Town, a former enclave of 19th-century Chinese and Portuguese traders, where umbrella-covered stalls sizzle outside pastel-coloured shophouses strung with red lanterns. Lunch might come in plastic bags but it is the most authentic you'll find on the island. It's also the cheapest. Feast on local specialities – soupy seafood *hokkien* noodles, skewers of sizzling sausages, oyster omelettes, piping-hot roti and velvety curries – for less than £1 a dish.



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANAIS + DAX/AUGUST; CHRISTIAN HOGUE





BEST HOTEL SHOP

What stands out most at Phuket's Point Yamu by COMO, *this picture and below*, are the impeccable details, from the antique Buddha hands repurposed as door handles to the vintage cart serving organic ice cream. At the hotel's boutique, masterminded by owner Christina Ong, the edit is small but flawless. The shop's version of Thai trousers favoured by gap-year travellers comes cut in dashing silk, and the swimsuit selection includes pin-up numbers by London-based Prism. Other must-buys include gold bangles, which look great stacked on a tanned arm. *www.comohotels.com*

BEST AFTERPARTY

As soon as the plates of curries and green-mango salad have been cleared at Ka Jok See, a restaurant and cabaret bar in Phuket Old Town, a ladyboy in glittery platforms and a sequined dress belts out 'It's Raining Men'. Everyone joins in, banging on bongos and tambourines, putting on cowboy hats and pink, plastic, heart-shaped sunglasses. It's eccentric to say the least, and dancing on tabletops is absolutely encouraged, as is initiating a conga line with the rest of the guests. Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell have been spotted kicking up their heels here. *+66 76 217903*

BEST CHEAP MASSAGE

Forget the brightly lit storefront massage parlours that are a dime a dozen in Thailand. Tanaporn Massage House on Koh Phangan somehow combines an authentic atmosphere (flowering gardens, gentle music, hushed surroundings) with bargain prices (less than £10 an hour) and therapists who make your body as limber as your 18-year-old best again. If you're lucky with your timing (in the earlier months of the year), the owner's mother-in-law might be in town; the deceivingly slight lady can make men cry – her hands are that strong. *www.tanaporn.com*

BEST CLIFFSIDE COCKTAILS

At sunset everyone heads to Baba Nest, *below*, for a rum-drenched My Thai Lady. Suspended up high, cut into the rocks of Phuket's Cape Panwa peninsula, the rooftop bar of the Baba Poolclub at Sri Panwa has knock-your-socks-off views over the Andaman Sea. The vibe is low-key, with sunken seats for flopping onto after a swim in the infinity pool. Come earlier in the day for lunch and order the sake-sashimi salad, salt-and-pepper calamari and tiger prawns, alongside a Piña Colada or the non-alcoholic Baba Punch with fresh orange, hibiscus juice and lime. *www.sripanwa.com*









BEST FOR HIGH ROLLERS

If you spy a frenzy of paparazzi and a private jet when you land at Phuket International, chances are its passengers are heading to Iniala Beach House, *above and above right*. A mix of modern architecture, MoMA-worthy art and a white-sand beach has made it one of Asia's most talked-about openings in the past few years. If it's a stretch to pay £10,000 a night to rent it all out, dip into the jetset life at the restaurant. The dishes by Eneko Atxa (of three-Michelin-starred Azurmendi in Bilbao) include cherry tomatoes served on bonsai trees, truffled egg yolks, seashell-shaped strawberry and rose petits fours. Maybe this is your chance for a selfie with a Kardashian. *www.iniala.com. Tasting menu about £80. Suites from about £700*

BEST BEATS

When Koh Samui's beachside Gecko Village was destroyed by fire, the owners relocated to Bophut Hills. Gone are the Bali-style interiors: the Gecko Bar & Supper Club, as it's now known, is slick with polished concrete, soaring ceilings and an infinity pool. By night, it's a different creature. Techno and house fans spill in for the Sunday sessions that are now legendary thanks to the famous names that play, including Dirty Vegas.

BEST ART

Known for his industrial-leaning designs, John Underwood creates copper ceiling fans, ornate steel screens and stone-carved bathtubs that can be seen in some of Asia's slickest hotels, including Indigo Pearl in Phuket and Hotel de la Paix in Cambodia. Find his furniture and sculptures at the Underwood Art Factory under Phuket's Mu Ban bypass. *www.underwood-phuket.com*



PHOTOGRAPHS: **LUCAS ALLEN; ZACH STOVALL; CHRIS WISE**



BEST GREAT ESCAPE

Thailand's fourth-largest – but least-visited - island, Ko Kood, sits in a pristine marine sanctuary near the Cambodian border. Largely mountainous, with thick jungle ringed by immaculate sandy bays, it feels totally off-grid. Stay in a straw hut at Neverland, the little beach houses at Shantaa Resort or in one of the largest hotel villas in the world at sybaritic Soneva Kiri, *this picture and previous page bottom right*, a beautiful spot with environmentally friendly design and authentic Thai touches. *www.neverlandresort.com; from about £30 per night. www.shantaakohkood.com; from about £50 per night. www.soneva.com; doubles from about £595*



BEST HIDEAWAY

Ask any Bangkok insider where to escape the city's chaos and totally unwind and Railei Beach Club in Krabi is bound to come up. On an idyllic bay bookended by limestone cliffs and fronted by a crystal sea with bobbing fishing boats, the Robinson Crusoe-styled wooden bungalows are set just back from the water and are a refuge for expat and well-heeled locals who happily rent them out to visitors when they're not in residence. The beach bar is not to be missed (try the passion-fruit Margarita) and the chefs adopt a market-to-table approach when they come and cook for you. The only drawback? The word is out, so book early in high season, especially for Christmas and New Year, when a seven-night minimum is required. *www.raileibeachclub.com. From about £65 per night*

BEST PICTURE-PERFECT BEACH

You'll need to get here early or hang late to get the postcard-worthy photo-op at Nangyuan near Koh Tao, a silvery sliver of a sandbar that connects three small islands linked by thigh-deep, crystal-clear water and a fishbowl-effect of tropical marine life.

BEST UNDISCOVERED CORNER

A land of free-diving sea gypsies, leafy cashew farms, Champagne-coloured sand and mint-green water: it is actually still possible to find unspoilt parts of Thailand. Until recently, almost no one had heard of the mellow island of Koh Phayam, on the Thai border with Burma – and those who had were unlikely to want to make the nine-hour slog on the night bus from Bangkok to get there. But Koh Phayam's fortunes are set to change (for better or worse) now the low-cost Thai airline Nok Air has started direct 90-minute flights from the capital. Get there before every hippy and hipster worth their pink Himalayan salt finds out about it. *www.nokair.com*

BEST REST

Getting a good night's sleep is serious business at the dreamy Six Senses Yao Noi. Tucked away on a sparsely populated island sandwiched between Krabi and Phuket, this do-gooding, eco-luxe hotel has always been a den of tranquility, but its Yogic Sleep programme takes snoozing to new levels. Guided meditation sessions, calming *qi gong* classes, yoga *nidra* – learning how to achieve a kind of conscious dream state – are combined with dream-catcher head massages, *pandan*-scented steams and detoxing scrubs, all under the guidance of doe-eyed yoga master Dorelal Singh from India. *www.sixsenses.com. Doubles from about £280*

PHOTOGRAPHS: PETER JACKSON/IMAGEBRIEF.COM; CHRIS WISE





BEST BAREFOOT BEACH BAR

The Flip Flop Pharmacy in Koh Phangan, *above*, exemplifies the hidden side of the island's north-east with its chilled-out vibe a million miles from the Full Moon parties this place has become known for. Here, instead, is a pavilion with worn-smooth floorboards, a drinks menu that would make any mixologist proud and a mellow soundtrack. But the best bits are the slouchy pillows, low tables and candlelit lanterns beneath a sky that changes from pink to starlit in the time it takes to sip a cocktail. *+66 77 445081*

BEST WATERFRONT CAFE

Casa Lapin x Samui has just opened at Fisherman's Village, right on fashionable Bophut Beach. The brainchild of architect-owner Surapan Tanta, one of Thailand's niche coffee pioneers, it continues the industrial-chic style of the Bangkok original – exposed brick walls with bare floorboards and a decked terrace. Here you'll find skilled baristas serving the best coffee on the island, as well as a range of smoothies, detox juices and punchy cocktails, alongside seafood platters piled high with lobster, prawns, oysters and scallops.

BEST BATHROOMS

On Mai Khao beach in the quiet north-west of the island, Sala Phuket, *right*, is peaceful and private, and completely removed from the party scene. The design is contemporary and sleek: lots of lime-washed wood, pale grey and taupe linen, and daybeds piled high with cushions. Most of the 79 suites and villas come with their own swimming pool but all of them have an open-air shower and a huge, egg-shaped marble bath outside for breezy evening bathing. *www.salaresorts.com. Doubles from about £80*







PHOTOGRAPHS: **EMEL ERNALBANT; WWW.BKKMENU.COM**

BEST REINVENTION

Pattaya is cleaning up its act. Forget the sleazy girlie bars, ear-splitting music and seedy massage parlours, it now has chic cafés, bars and restaurants. Check out A' La Campagne, *left and opposite top right*, with its French-style interiors, modern European food and amazing coffee. Pop next door to Somtum Villa for a cracking green-papaya salad and end the day with sunset drinks at Silver Lining on the beach. For healthy smoothies, head to the Spa Café, *above*, in nearby Chon Buri, and the funky Conpanno Café has delicious ice cream.

BEST SEAFOOD

It may be off the beaten track but the pier at Bang Bao, a village in southern Koh Chang, has the most fantastic fish. It doesn't matter which restaurant you pick, though if you want to choose your seafood specifically, Lom Talay and Chow Lay have large tanks teeming with various knobbly crustaceans. Local specialities include grilled mantis shrimp (*kung pao*) and stir-fried spider crab in red curry sauce (*boo paht pong karee*).

BEST SNORKEL STOP

Grab a mask and head to the Similan Islands, a national park west of Khao Lak that's well worth its designation as one of the world's best diving sites. After discovering the shoals of rich coral reefs and the spectacular limestone islands, the squeaky soft beaches are just the spot for a picnic.

GETTING THERE

For bespoke itineraries to Thailand and personalised service, contact **Cleveland Collection** (+44 20 3111 0805; www.clevelandcollection.co.uk)

CONTRIBUTORS: Lee Cobaj, Ondine Cohane, Anna Chittenden, Michael Paul


P E A K Y



BLINDERS

SCALING THE SLOPES DOESN'T HAVE TO MEAN SKY-HIGH PRICES. NOW A SAVVY SET OF GOOD-LOOKING, GREAT-VALUE BOLTHOLES ARE ROCKING THE WINTER-BREAK SCENE. HERE ARE THE BEST SKI HOTELS FOR UNDER £150





MODERN FAMILY

THE CAMBRIAN ADELBODEN, SWITZERLAND

Yes, there are swankier hotels in Switzerland. Bigger, glossier and more geared up for Instagram likes than this place in Adelboden – the shy, demure cousin of ostentatious Andermatt, Zermatt and Verbier. But you have children in tow. You don't want stuffy dining, basement nightclubs and silent, glass-like infinity pools. You want porters to greet you, whip your bags away, park your car and instantly arrange trips, ski lessons, passes, sledges, babysitters and the exact, not-on-the-menu sandwich that your eldest has begged for since getting on the plane. You want to splash in the rooftop pool at sunset without fear of rebuke; scoff burgers at 4pm in front of the open fire, with red wine for you, hot chocolate for them. And then, on the flipside, you want exquisite food, as long as no one bats an eyelid when the kids get under the table and make a camp out of napkins. At The Cambrian, all this is possible. The decor in the bedrooms is simple, comfortable and a bit bland, but in the gorgeous living room it's the perfect balance of contemporary and slick. Kick off with a big breakfast – freshly baked breads, a forest of fruits and yogurts – then just give the front desk the nod and someone will run you to the cable car. No, it's not ski-in-ski-out, but there isn't a strict printed schedule of bus times either; this place is easy, willing and informal, like visiting an old friend who has all the time in the world to make sure you get the best out of your stay. And while the gentle pistes and huge ski area will keep you on the mountain all day, if little legs still have energy to burn there's a terrifying new climbing tower. Now that's an Instagram opportunity, right there.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £145. Powder Byrne (www.powderbyrne.com) offers tailor-made family ski packages to The Cambrian*





NORDIC EXPOSURE

LE FAUCIGNY, CHAMONIX, FRANCE

Returning here after a day's skiing feels a little like arriving at a Swedish house party. Bunches of attractive 20- and 30-somethings in chunky knitted sweaters chatter in singsong dialect as they sip strong coffee and hand around warm biscuits. Intermittently, flaxen-haired reinforcements join the group, fresh from the sauna. Geographically, traditionally and spiritually, Chamonix is the hub of the French ski scene. So it's a revelation to discover this anomaly so close to its heart. At Le Faucigny, it's not just many guests and staff who are noticeably Scandinavian: the utilitarian design is all clean lines and simple whites and greys. Admittedly, the rooms are teeny (there are 28 squished into a pretty townhouse), but genuinely cosy, with woollen lampshades, tongue-and-groove cladding and fluffy pillows. From a skiing perspective there are deft touches, including a 20 per cent discount on equipment hire from a local outfit. There's a Jacuzzi to soothe post-piste aches before exploring the town's lively restaurants for supper.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £60. +33 4 50 53 01 17; www.hotelfaucigny-chamonix.com. For more details about the region, visit www.savoie-mont-blanc.com*

PHOTOGRAPH: **FABRICE RAMBERT**



ACCESS ALL AREAS

MILKHOTEL
LES CARROZ-D'ARACHES, FRANCE

This is a pristine example of what the French call '*écolo-chic*'. The food served in the snug, black-walled restaurant is fresh and locally sourced, and all the charmingly simple bedrooms are crammed with natural products, from organic soaps and shampoos to 100-per-cent-linen sheets. From the front, the hotel resembles a treehouse or wooden fort, high above the village of Les Carroz-d'Arâches in the Grand Massif. But from the back, one of its main plus points is instantly revealed: the Milk is ski-in-ski-out, a rare luxury at this price. The main run back to the village sweeps right past the sunny south-facing terrace, delivering you straight to the bar at the end of an afternoon's skiing, and positioning you perfectly to observe the fun and games as everybody else makes their way down too. But an environmentally friendly attitude, excellent set menus every evening and direct access to the pistes aren't the only selling points. At just under an hour's drive from Geneva, its location is also pretty unbeatable, making it a great option for a no-hassle ski weekend from the UK. The homely welcome adds to that sense of ease. As soon as the lift opens on to the reception-living-room, you walk out into a scene of wooden furniture, sheepskin throws and roaring fires. Serene and green, and in a prime spot to boot, this is one of the biggest steals in the entire Alps.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £105. +33 6 17 77 70 23; www.milkhotel.fr*

PALE AND INTERESTING

LA FELINE BLANCHE
SAINT-GERVAIS-LES-BAINS, FRANCE

We all know about black cats, but what of their white brethren? Across Asia and many parts of Africa, *une féline blanche* is the ultimate signifier of happiness and luck. Likewise, the boutique hotel of the same name in the pretty village of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains is far from disagreeable. Its 10 sizeable rooms (split over three floors) are airy and grown-up, with big, soft beds and huge baths (for the best of both – and the finest view – book room 22). The fact that they are divided into four categories – bronze, silver, vermilion and gold – tells you all you need to know about the owners. Their keen eye for detail is matched only by a desire to do things a little differently. This ethos is apparent everywhere from the bathrooms (separated from the bedrooms by simple wool curtains) to the breakfast of homemade croissants and yogurt. Instead of boar heads and wooden skis on the walls, there are carved logs as bedside tables, circular mirrors dotted about, and lots of white. It's like a White Company beach house meets an all-American ice-cream parlour. As a base for a ski holiday, Saint-Gervais is a find: a picturesque old village with a beautiful baroque church, good snowfall and easy connections to dozens of pistes, yet somehow obscured in plain sight between Chamonix and Megève. The nightlife is next-to-non-existent, but if you're after decent skiing combined with excellent Savoyard restaurants and romantic evenings over bottles of delicious local wine, this is the ticket.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £65. +33 4 50 96 58 70; www.lafelineblanche.com*





CLEAN SWEEP

WIESERGUT HINTERGLEMM, AUSTRIA

The roots of this place are firmly planted in the earth. Owners Sepp and Martina Kröll completely updated the existing guesthouse on farmland owned by his family since 1350 in Hinterglemm, a village 100km from Salzburg. Sepp's father still runs the farm and his mother makes organic butter and cheese for the restaurant. With a concept-store-style lobby and living room filled with design books, the hotel feels like a private members' club for creatives. Guests are architects and CEOs of advertising agencies, but many of them don't come here for the skiing. They come for the design, the food, the slow living. In winter, the main house is a snow-white peak jutting up in front of a Christmas-tree forest at the bottom of the slopes; seven glassy suites with rooftop gardens are in sync with the landscape whatever the season. Inside, abstract stormy-grey paintings by Andrea Traub allude to the mountains. Bare wood, stone and unbleached linen add to the minimal look. The pure spirit extends to the restaurant too. Chef Patrick Sagmeister does interesting things with home-grown vegetables, using foams and fermentation to dress delicate dishes of parsnip soup and chamois from the day's hunt. And there's natural wine on the Austrian-only list: the peppery Hannes Reeh Unplugged Zweigelt is fantastic with veal. Across the valley, the couple's other restaurant, Wieseralm, is a great pitstop for Aperol Spritz. At night, hurtle all the way back down the flood-lit mountainside on a toboggan.

BOOK IT *Design Hotels (+44 800 3746 8357; www.designhotels.com) offers doubles from about £125*



BRIGHT YOUNG THING

HAUS HIRT
BAD GASTEIN, AUSTRIA

When hotelier Evelyn Ikrath bought the old Kuhr Hotel in 2000 she wanted to keep the spirit of its 1920s heritage – when German novelist Thomas Mann used to stay – while bringing it into the new millennium with a dash of eccentricity. This is clear in touches including the blue, orange, red and pink stripes, painted barcode-style on the restaurant ceiling, which draw the eye out to cinematic views over the Gastein valley. In the 29 bedrooms antique furniture is livened up with the pop of a magenta armchair or sunshine-yellow bathroom walls, with large windows or balconies to take in the surrounding scenery. But for all its design touches this is, at heart, a family hotel with a dedicated children's dinner-time, specially created fruity mocktails at the bar and a raft of equipment on hand (mountain buggies; bottle warmers) to save the excess luggage. Bad Gastein is a small, belle-époque town best known for its hot springs and numerous spa hotels, and the little Aveda spa at Haus Hirt draws on the healing thermal waters from the nearby Bad Gastein waterfall. Of course, there is skiing too. With more than 220km of slopes, it's popular for cross-country skiing and hikes through the Hohe Tauern National Park in summer. All that mountain air works up an appetite, and fortunately Haus Hirt serves its organic menus almost continually: breakfast until 11am, lunch from noon until 5pm and dinner at 7pm – all to a soundtrack curated by a Viennese DJ friend of the ever-present host Evelyn.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £145. +43 643 427 970; www.haus-hirt.com*







URBAN OUTFITTERS

MAMA THRESL
LEOGANG, AUSTRIA

With just one season under its belt, this hotel is already pulling in the crowds; it's a mostly young and sporty crew but families fit right in too. It is named after the real mother of owner Renate and her 10 siblings, and tongue-in-cheek photos of the smiling Mama Thresl character pop up everywhere, so although it's stylish, the vibe is far from serious. The place is decked out in untreated pine, an updated take on the traditional orange-stained chalet design. In the bedrooms basins and showers are carved from solid stone and there are carefully positioned pegs for sweaty socks and soggy gloves. This is a well-thought-out hotel with the feel of a city hostel, a hipster in the Austrian Alps. Towering behind the island bar by the main reception is a huge oak climbing wall and in the restaurant an open kitchen prepares post-ski fodder of truffle-bun-wrapped burgers from a lava grill and crisp *tarte flambée*. From Thursday to Saturday DJs play, as resident trapeze artists Tansy, Holly and Becky perform above the bar. The sisters, who landed in Austria fresh from circus school in Cape Town, double as waitresses when you make it down for a breakfast of pastries, homemade jams and Mama Thresl's own eggs. This is the first hotel in Europe to collaborate with GoPro, so cameras can be borrowed for a day on the slopes. There are so many, between little Leogang and the higher, neighbouring Saalbach and Hinterglemm, that you can ski all day without repeating a single piste. And this December a connection to Skicircus Fieberbrunn will make the collective Skicircus Austria's largest linked winter resort, with a new lift system to boot.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £100. +43 658 320 800; www.mama-thresl.com*

HOUSE PARTY

SKI LODGE ENGELBERG
SWITZERLAND

For legendary off-piste skiing and a beautiful town that has a 12th-century baroque abbey as well as rocking nightlife, it's hard to beat Engelberg. The 'mountain of angels' is wedged into a deep valley with skiing on both sides and a railway that zips up the middle and ends in the heart of town. Take a train from Zürich and in less than two hours you'll be standing on the platform looking at the Ski Lodge. The 39-bedroom bolthole is the labour of love for two Swedish friends, Eric Spongberg and Niklas Möller, who abandoned corporate careers to create the ski hotel they always dreamed of finding during their extensive travels. The result is a cool property that respects the graceful lines of the original early-20th-century building. The elegant bedrooms tick the owners' must-have boxes (comfortable beds, plush linens and great showers) but also have covetable leather chairs and cosy throws. Other essentials are a lively bar, top-notch food and staff who are as knowledgeable about the local skiing as the owners are. The bar is always packed with goggle-tanned skiers, pointing out their latest adventures on an enormous Engelberg map. Keeping it Swedish in the kitchen is chef Jonas Bolling, winner of the Culinary World Cup 2014. Clever guests plump for half-board here, making the most of his three-course dinners, which include the likes of salmon tartare, veal Wellington with foie gras and apple compote. And if you've managed to ski Engelberg's Big Five in a day – five off-piste runs with 9,750 metres of vertical descent – you'll definitely be asking for seconds.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £130. +41 416 373 500; www.skilodgeengelberg.com*



PHOTOGRAPHS: **DAVID DE VLEESCHAUWER**



SHOP AND FLOP

BRUCKE 49
VALS, SWITZERLAND

Deep in a valley in Graubünden, two hours south of Zürich, is the village of Vals. Yet for its sleepy nature (the population is just 1,000), there are a few surprises: Therme Vals, the stark spa hotel by world-class architect Peter Zumthor, as well as this ultra-stylish B&B filled with design classics. Brücke 49 is an unusual-for-the-area French-built house, with larger windows, higher ceilings and bigger rooms than its neighbours, on the banks of the Valser Rhine. It was bought in 2010 by Swiss-Danish couple Ruth Kramer and Thomas Schacht, who opened it as a guesthouse a year later after a full renovation, from the new deep-grey façade to the handcrafted furniture. Each of the four bedrooms has its own look (a poppy-blue Finn Juhl Pelican chair in the Brücke suite; exposed beams in Tomül) but they're set against a backdrop of grey and white, and dotted with market finds and mid-century pieces (Arne Jacobsen lighting, Royal Copenhagen crockery). If you like what you see, the couple are in the habit of selling furniture to enquiring guests. The only sacrifice for the bargain rate is that the four bedrooms share two bathrooms, but they are large, lovely ones at that. There's a sensational breakfast of cooked-to-order eggs and bacon, local cheeses and cured meats. Step outside and it's a short walk to the cable car to whizz you up to the pistes without a queue in sight.

BOOK IT *Double from about £135. +41 81 420 4949; www.brucke49.ch*

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN MORRELL



THAT 70S SHOW

HOTEL DES DROMONTS AVORIAZ, FRANCE

The bar at this groovy little ski-in-ski-out hideaway feels much as it would have four decades ago when movie movers and shakers including Steven Spielberg and David Lynch pow-wowed here over *apéros*. They were in town for the annual Avoriaz Fantasy Film Festival, and the spectre of Hitchcock's floating head still fills the place – on one of the vintage posters for the event hanging on the walls. Far from talking big deals, the crowd here now (30-something couples, families with teenagers) come for *digéstifs* after gorging on steak tartare and bubbling fondue in the restaurants. Dromonts is freshly revamped: it opened last winter as part of the chic French group Sibuet (Les Fermes de Marie, Altapura). But the hotel, built in 1964, retains elements of the psychedelic. Jocelyne Sibuet has updated the interior while keeping time with its hippie beat in trippy clashing colours of tangerine and purple, cow hides and egg chairs. Clad in cedar shingles with walls at haphazard angles and a steeply pitched roof, the exterior is just as quirky. It all fits in with the resort itself, which was the brainchild of ex-Olympic skier Jean Vuarnet and architect Jacques Labro, who wanted every building to blend into the landscape. Avoriaz is at the heart of the Portes du Soleil ski area, with its 650km of pistes, and has had a good snow record over the last few seasons when other places fretted about unseasonably warm temperatures. It is car-free (all part of Labro's master plan), so the only way to get around is in horse-drawn sledges or on skis. Exploring it at night, all you hear is crunching and whooshing and the tinkle of sleigh bells. Spielberg would approve: it's just as fantastical as ever.

BOOK IT *Doubles from about £150. +33 4 56 44 57 00; www.hoteldes dromonts.com. For more details about Avoriaz, visit www.avoriaz.com*

HIP TO BE SQUARE

EDEN HOTEL BORMIO, ITALY

Forget for a moment the classic Alpine hotels with gently sloping roofs, retro interiors heated by an ancient *stube* and red geraniums lining the windows. Instead, imagine something more architectural: four tall, narrow buildings made of wood, glass and local stone, jutting into the winter air like a cuboid mountain range. Designed by Antonio Citterio, Patricia Viel & Partners, this hotel in the historic hamlet of Bormio in the Italian Alps is a thoroughly modern take on traditional chalet cosiness. The interiors cleverly walk the line between minimalist and mountain style: wood-clad but in clean, pale, organic European larch; bed frames covered in check fabric, but rendered in cool monochrome; sleek rectangular fireplaces and black-and-white photographs of woodland blown up floor-to-ceiling size in some of the 27 bedrooms. Top Neapolitan chef Antonio Borruso is in charge of the food. Breakfast is a feast of delicacies – yogurt and cheese, homemade bread and cakes, special teas – and his dinner menu at Restaurant Umami combines Alpine flavours with a nod to his native Southern Italy: risotto with prawns and *bitto* (a local cheese), *pastiera Napoletana* (Borruso's take on the typical rich ricotta cake from Naples). Bormio has been attracting visitors for its thermal baths for centuries, but the mountains are just as much of a draw: the Ortler Alps, with 60km of ski runs in the heart of the Stelvio National Park, are framed by the hotel's vast windows.

BOOK IT *Design Hotels (+44 800 3746 8357; www.designhotels.com) offers doubles from about £100*

CONTRIBUTORS: Lydia Gard, Tabitha Joyce, Martin Kauffmann, Gabriella Le Breton, Hazel Lubbock, Grainne McBride, Debbie Pappyn, Laura Taccari, Jonathan Thompson





AROUND THE WORLD WITH PETER SARSGAARD

He's starred alongside Carey Mulligan in *An Education* and now Winona Ryder in *Experimenter*, but if you're lucky you can catch him in the Brooklyn organic shop where he works voluntary shifts

Where have you just come back from?
'I was in Toronto for the film festival, and now I'm in my backyard in Brooklyn. My goal is always to get back to my family as fast as possible.'

Where have you felt happiest?
'Probably Big Sur, more specifically the hot springs at the Esalen Institute and at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.'

Which is your favourite city, and why?
'Copenhagen, where bicycles rule. There's also a lot of bespoke fashion, which my wife [actress Maggie Gyllenhaal] loves. The food is certainly gastronomically interesting. We ate at Noma, which is fancy, fancy, fancy. She had raw meat with ants on it. I'm vegetarian so I ate reindeer moss or something, and they served someone else raw langoustine.'

Which is your road most travelled?
'I go to Martha's Vineyard quite a bit. My wife's family have had a place there for years, so it's a habitual thing. Just don't go in August; there are too many ticks and it's the hub of Lyme Disease. But it's nice off season. September would be perfect.'

The smartest hotel you've stayed in?
'The Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai. It's bananas. My preference is always for somewhere like the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur, as I like natural settings, but the Taj is a whole other order of magnitude.'

First holiday without your parents?
'I biked around Nova Scotia with a friend one summer, including Cape Breton Island, which is a spectacular place. We got the ferry from Maine and slept in people's yards with our tents, because everyone there is incredibly friendly. And the music is fantastic; that's where the music from Louisiana comes from originally, so it's got that Southern feel.'

Describe a holiday disaster
'Oh I've had loads! When I was a kid we took a train from Nice to Rome, and someone put ether in our cabin and stole everything. Our passports, our plane tickets, our wallets… We arrived in Rome with nothing. The Italians were lovely in helping us. Slow as hell, but lovely. Apparently that train – which is also the first place I saw people having sex – was notorious for this sort of thing, but we didn't know.'

'I know this great little place…'
'Teddy's Juke Joint north of Baton Rouge. It's a place you've always imagined exists in the South. The last time we went the owner was playing the organ and sort of doing karaoke at the same time. Acts you wouldn't believe have stopped through.'

'THE TRAIN WE TOOK TO ROME WHEN I WAS A KID WAS THE FIRST PLACE I SAW PEOPLE HAVING SEX'

What do you pack first?
'My running shoes. I've run in practically every city in the world and I have to say, it's the best way to see a place.'

Sightseeing or sun lounger?
'I'm not like, 'let's go to the Louvre' just because it's the Louvre. If there's something specific to see, I'll see it. I hate compulsory museum visits with someone who wants to look at everything. I like to spend 45 minutes, one hour maximum, with one thing and get deeply immersed in that.'

I would never, ever go back to…
'Taiwan. It really rubbed me the wrong way. I couldn't figure out where I belonged there. I went running up into the hills and they had all these signs about dangerous monkeys, so I quickly ran back down.'

Ever taken anything from a hotel room?
'I will probably pay the consequence for this, but I've been wanting to say it for a while because I've had a guilty conscience. I took a picture from the Esalen Institute. It's not fancy at all, just a little one of its founding members. I was actually talking about it with my wife the other day and I said when we go back to Esalen, I'm giving it back. I took it about 15 years ago and now it's in the closet somewhere; there's no enjoying something like that.'

Who's the most interesting person you've encountered on your travels?
'A man named Dimitri on the Greek island of Hydra. I wish I had his attitude to money and capitalism in general. It was, "Yeah, this debt crisis is a big deal, but we still have our ideas, our art. You can't take away this glass of ouzo, and this sunset and this little painting I'm working on."'

Most-used foreign phrase?
'"*¿Dónde está el baño?*" is the only Spanish I know, but it's the kind of thing you want to know.'

What would you like in your mini-bar?
'One of the reasons I quit drinking was because I always had a mini-bar in my room and as I was always in a hotel room, it was always staring at me. The mini-bar is not my friend and I avoid it at all costs.'

Most regrettable holiday souvenir?
'Well, there are these shoes I got in Greece. They're traditional ones that look like clogs with a little pom-pom on the toe. I was going to put them on with a djellaba I picked out in Morocco, which I wear around the house. I look like Obi Wan Kenobi and my children love it, so I thought the shoes would go with it, but actually I just look ridiculous. They're beautiful, but just not for wearing.'

Nominate your 8th wonder of the world
'Newfoundland's Gros Morne National Park. There are really steep cliffs and icebergs going by. It's unbelievable. And there's a rock that juts out over one of the fjords like a diving board. It's high enough to recite the Lord's Prayer in its entirety before you hit the water. I've always loved heights and many of my closest friends are rock climbers, although I don't have the body for it – I'm too big.'

Peter Sarsgaard was speaking to Francesca Babb. He stars in 'Black Mass', out in cinemas on 27 November

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF VESPA/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES


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PROMOTIONS



THE ONE TO WATCH

IN JUST 75 YEARS, QATAR HAS EVOLVED FROM A SPARSELY POPULATED DESERT STATE INTO A BEACON OF PROGRESS, CULTURE AND AMBITION – AND THERE'S PLENTY MORE TO COME, SAYS **TIM GLYNNE-JONES**

Qatar is a country on a mission. By 2030 it is aiming to have completed the transition from a hydrocarbon economy to a knowledge economy, making it a global hub for groundbreaking science and technology, art, culture and thought. Put simply, it is an objective to create sustainable commerce from the things that make life better. Having begun the transition from a desert state with a smattering of small fishing, farming and pearl diving communities as recently as the 1940s, there is much work to do, but as you fly in over the warm blue waters of the Arabian Gulf to land at the smart new Hamad International Airport, you can see the plan unfolding before your eyes. Incredible architecture – houses offices, hotels, museums, concert halls and sports facilities – with new visions taking shape everywhere you look. The future promises to be incredible but for progressive businesses, adventurous families and travellers hungry for new thrills, Qatar is the place to be right now. ✺



THE RUINS OF A MOSQUE AT AL JUMAIL, AN ABANDONED 19TH-CENTURY VILLAGE ON THE NORTH-WEST COAST



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natural ATTRACTION

For a proper impression of Qatar and all it has to offer, you need to venture out of Doha, into the wilderness and beyond to its furthest shores, where there is a side to the country that may surprise you



Clockwise from above: Qatar desert scenery; Extracting a pearl from an oyster; Zubarah Fort

Qatar is a small country, measuring 160km from base to tip and about 80km across, which means you can make excursions to its furthest extremities from your hotel in Doha and be home in plenty of time for dinner. And you'll be glad you did, for beyond the D-Ring road that encompasses the capital lie a number of quirky, beautiful and utterly unexpected sites that are well worth a visit.

The first is Dhal Al Misfir (cave of brightness), a large natural sinkhole, that can be reached easily by car, about 24km from downtown Doha. Visitors are taken down 40 metres into the ground, where the yellow gypsum crystal that forms the walls of the cave glows like moonlight. The cave is also home to a colony of little owls (Athene noctua), which you might spot if you're lucky.



ON THE ROAD

Continue north on the Rawdat Rashid Road and you arrive at Al Shahaniya, the home of Qatar's camel racing. A lesser known feature of the village, though, is the remarkable Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani Museum. From the outside you might think it's an old fortress – it keeps its contents surprisingly unexulted – but inside there are 15 exhibition halls containing an eclectic collection of vintage cars, fossils, coins, ceramics, weapons, manuscripts, even old fishing boats. Sheikh Faisal is a member of the ruling family and one of the country's most successful businessmen. The collection has been amassed from his travels and there is a charming haphazardness about the way it is presented – including the fact that you have to phone and book an appointment in advance.

From Al Shahaniya you can continue west into the desert or return to your hotel and prepare to spend your next night under the stars. Your destination is the peninsula known as Bir Zekreet (or Ras Abrouq) located on the west coast just across the water from Bahrain. A 4x4 is essential transport and you will need to bring supplies of food and water as there are no shops or facilities at the end of this road. This is genuine wilderness.

You enter a desert landscape of mushroom-shaped rock formations and flat-topped plateaus, where the sedimentary rock has been eroded to leave artistically formed limestone outcrops. Among this two-story topography stands a work of art by the world's foremost living sculptor, Richard Serra, which appears out of the desert like a mirage. Entitled *East-West/West-East*, it consists of four steel towers, the tallest of which are nearly 17 metres high – to match the height of the plateaus – spaced out over about 1.5km in a straight line. It's the last thing you would expect to find here, yet it looks entirely complementary.

Further north stands an idyllic looking village by an oasis, where gazelles and falcons drink. Yet the village is deserted. In fact, it was never occupied. Known as Film City, it was built as a set for a Qatari television production. Soon after Film City you reach your resting place for the night, the beautiful half-moon beach of Ras Abrouq, littered with oyster shells and crabs. You can paddle in the warm, shallow water and then pitch camp beneath the acacia trees.

NATURE TRAIL

Next morning, the drive takes you to the northern tip of Qatar and the Umm Tais Natural Reserve. After a day in Doha it's hard to imagine the biodiversity that exists here, just 80km or so up the coast, but there are mangrove forests and the land and water conditions attract a number of migratory birds and a wealth of marine life, including turtles, which come here to nest.

After all those surprises, it's a fast drive back down the Al Shamal Road to the familiarity of Doha for a little R&R in your hotel before dinner.











Clockwise from top right: Mangrove forest, Umm Tais; Qatari children playing; Sheikh Faisal Museum, Al Shahaniya; 4x4, Ras Abrouq. Centre: East-West/ West-East

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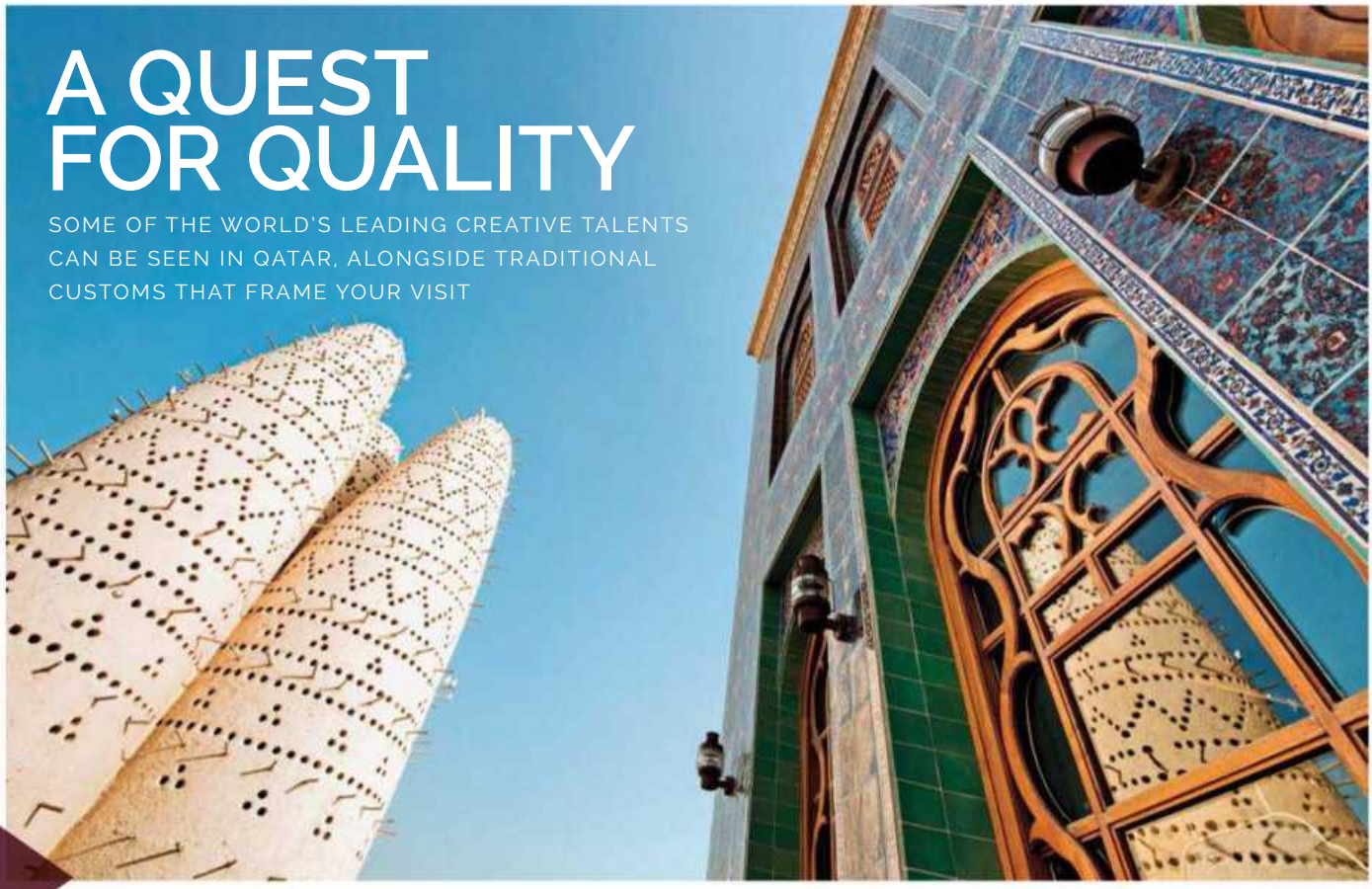
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QATAR

A QUEST FOR QUALITY

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Serious about its own traditions, inquisitive about new ideas – that's one way to sum up Qatar's approach to culture. The early-morning call of the muezzin is a daily reminder that the Islamic faith is strong here and the monochrome national dress of crisp white thobe (full-length shirt) and gutra (headdress) for men, and black abaya (gown) and shayla (headdress) for women is strictly observed in public. So wherever you find yourself, whether it's a meander through the narrow passageways of **Souq Waqif**, dinner aboard a wooden dhow on the warm waters of West Bay or even cruising the air-conditioned corridors of one of Doha's many shopping malls, there are constant reminders that you are very much immersed in Arabia.

But Qatar is not closed to cultural influences from beyond the Islamic world – far from it, as long as it's of high quality. Doha was named Arab Capital of Culture in 2010 and it has not looked back. The thirst for knowledge has opened the door to a wealth of creative talents, from architects to jazz musicians, to come and stamp their mark on the cultural landscape. From a vantage point on the **Corniche** you can take in both the angular beauty of I M Pei's highly acclaimed Museum of Islamic Art and the emerging spectacle of Jean Nouvel's **National Museum of Qatar**, (due for completion in 2016) – not to mention the traditional Arabic contours of Souq Waqif and the flamboyant spiral minaret of the Islamic Cultural Center.

At street level the babble of different languages is evidence of the multitude of ethnic groups living and working in Qatar. The most predominant tongues are Arabic, English and Malayalam, the language of Kerala in southern India – a region that has imbued Qatar with its own cultural riches, not least the food. For traditional western culture vultures, Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra puts on regular concerts at the Opera House in **Katara** (the cultural village) often featuring Middle Eastern musicians like oud virtuoso Marcel Khalife. Be prepared for surprises too. You might come across a Qatari boy in traditional dress playing flamenco guitar at the opening of an art exhibition, or a local comedian cracking up a Western audience with jokes about work permits. In Qatar, if you can think it, it could happen.





CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: KATARA, THE CULTURAL VILLAGE; FALCONRY IS A LONG-ESTABLISHED PURSUIT; TRADITIONAL ARAB TEXTILES

DID YOU KNOW?

INDIANS MAKE UP A QUARTER OF QATAR'S POPULATION – THAT'S TWICE THE NUMBER OF QATARIS THEMSELVES.

PLATFORM FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

EXHIBITING WORLD TREASURES AND INSPIRING NEW TALENT – QATAR HAS BECOME A MAJOR DESTINATION FOR ART LOVERS





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AL ZUBARAH FORT; ZABRA INDOOR/ OUTDOOR EXHIBITION, KATARA CULTURAL VILLAGE; SEAFRONT AT KATARA; MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART

Archaeological artefacts dating back to the 4th century BC give an idea of the ancient history of Qatar, but its most prominent sites date from more recent times when this peninsula served as a strategic stopping place for traders bringing treasures from India to Europe. The UNESCO World Heritage Site at Al Zubarah, in the north-west, comprises the remnants of a ruined city that once served as a base for pioneers and pirates alike. A little further inland stands **Al Zubarah Fort**, an iconic sandstone edifice built in 1938, complete with turrets and battlements, ready to repel incursions from the direction of Bahrain.

But Qatar's historical treasures weren't all shipped in from overseas. The harbour towns dotted around the coast grew up as havens for pearl diving (alongside fishing) and pearls were Qatar's primary source of wealth before the discovery of oil. This tradition is celebrated every year with the **Senyar pearl diving** and fishing competition, where young Qataris head out from the beach at **Katara** on wooden dhows to spend three days vying for the biggest catch.

The search for homegrown treasures also forms the basis of Qatar's approach to art. Big money purchases of famous paintings have announced the country's arrival as a major player on the international art scene – and the benefits of such spending are already in evidence in and around Doha. Funded by Qatar Museums and its chairperson, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the city has become home to a variety of art destinations, including the **Museum of Islamic Art** (MIA) and **Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art** and the forthcoming **National Museum of Qatar**. Between the MIA and the National Museum stands the **Al Riwaq** gallery, which has hosted exhibitions by internationally renowned artists Takashi Murakami and Damien Hirst, but most recently put on *Here There* – a collaboration between Qatar and Brazil, which featured works by emerging talents from both countries. New galleries like the **Fire Station** and the projected **Art Mill** will further promote Qatari art while the acquisition of masterpieces from around the world continues to inspire.



DID YOU KNOW?

QATAR MUSEUMS LANDSCAPED THE PARK SURROUNDING THE MIA TO A DESIGN BY I M PEI AND RICHARD SERRA TO ACCOMMODATE SERRA'S SPECIALLY COMMISSIONED SCULPTURE '7'.





FIRE IN THE BLOOD

WHILE ALL THE TALK IS ABOUT THE 2022 WORLD CUP, THE PASSION FOR SPORT RUNS A LOT DEEPER IN A COUNTRY WHERE RAIN VERY RARELY STOPS PLAY



DID YOU KNOW ?

LUSAIL INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT BECAME THE FIRST VENUE IN THE WORLD TO HOLD A MOTO GP NIGHT RACE IN 2008.

Just as sailors used to navigate by the North Star, newcomers to Doha take their bearings from a 300-metre high landmark, known as the **Torch**, which dominates the skyline for miles. Built as the focal point for the **Asian Games** in 2006, it is a beacon to sport, marking as it does, the nerve centre of Qatari sporting endeavour, **Aspire Zone**.

Among the facilities at Aspire are a 50,000-seat stadium, an Olympic-size swimming pool and the world's largest multisport indoor arena. There is also a sports academy, with pristine grass football pitches that have borne the nimble tread of Lionel Messi and his Barcelona teammates, who, along with other teams including Manchester United, have used the facility for warm-weather training.

Qatar is no stranger to sporting legends. **Doha Golf Club** hosts the annual **PGA Tour Commercial Bank Qatar Masters**, the motor racing circuit at **Lusail** is a fixture on the Moto GP calendar and **Qatar Tennis Federation** puts on regular ATP Tour events. So the addition of several air-conditioned football stadiums in time for the **World Cup** in 2022, while a source of great excitement, is nothing more than the natural next step.

What these world-class sporting venues have in common is that, when they're not being graced by global superstars, they're being used to develop grassroots sport in Qatar and are available for public use too. And that's important in a country where a passion for competition and skill runs in the blood.

About 30km north-west of Doha, on the **Dukhan Highway**, a satellite image shows an intriguing complex of concentric ovals that look like they might be crop circles. But there are no crops here other than dates. This is **Al Shahaniya Camel Racetrack** and here you will witness spectator participation like you've never seen it before. The camels are mounted by robot jockeys, complete in the coloured silks of their owners and controlled remotely by operators who follow the race on an inside track in a fleet of white SUVs. As the camels gallop round the 6km oval at speeds of up to 65km/hr, they are pursued by their operators and a second cavalcade of white SUVs on an exterior track. These are the spectators, who jockey and jostle for a decent view of the race while trying not to crash into one another.

The SUV is the vehicle of choice for anyone who ventures off the tarmac – a challenge best left to the experts. There are plenty of firms who will pick you up from your hotel in Doha and drive you down the coast to **Sealine**, where the road runs out and the dune bashing begins. Put yourself in their capable hands and you'll be in for an exhilarating ride.

You can combine your dash down the dunes with a tranquil night in the desert and a chance to let your adrenalin settle by the placid waters of **Khor Al Udeid,** popularly known as the 'Inland Sea'. At times you can hear the dunes 'sing' – a music caused by the shifting sands rubbing together, and, beneath the surface you can find leaf-like gypsum deposits known as desert roses.

If you like your sport a bit less bumpy, **Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club** is the place to go for horse racing, which parallels the camel racing season from November to February, with a handful of prestige events in March and April. Along with **falconry**, both these forms of racing are in the Qatari blood and it's the endurance specialist **Arabian horse**, rather than the speedier thoroughbred, that dominates.

With sunshine all year round and the warm waters of the Gulf never far away, the opportunities to participate in sport are many and varied and there's a club for everything, from archery to yachting. On Saturdays the roads are quiet and cycling clubs take to the tarmac, or head for the circuits of Aspire Zone. On any patch of open ground you can find a game of cricket taking place among the local Indian community, and up and down the coast you can sign up for sailing, windsurfing, kayaking, jetskiing, fishing and diving, with equipment and instruction readily available.

If you're wondering where to start, just head for the Torch.

LEFT: THE ASPIRE ZONE WITH ITS FAMOUS TORCH. **RIGHT:** DUNE BASHING IN AN SUV





SPENDING TIME

HAGGLERS, HAWKERS AND HIGH-END EMPORIA COMPETE FOR YOUR CUSTOM IN DOHA'S SHOPPING DISTRICTS, WITH AN EQUALLY ECLECTIC MIX OF DINING OPTIONS WAITING TO REFRESH YOU AT THE END OF THE DAY

Souq Waqif may be a 21st-century facsimile of a traditional souq but the vendors who line its narrow passageways are entirely genuine about their trade. This beautiful Doha landmark stands on a site where people have come to shop for centuries and is so faithful in its reconstruction that you can imagine yourself 200 years ago, perusing the tiny shops for colourful spices and cloth, marvelling at the cacophony of caged birds or even haggling over a new horse. It's all here at **Souq Waqif**.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: VIEW OF DOHA SKYLINE; SOUQ WAQIF; NOBU DOHA; AN ARABIC COFFEE SET; TRADITIONAL DHOWS OVERLOOKING DOHA SKYLINE; SPICES AT SOUQ WAQIF; ARABIC INCENSE



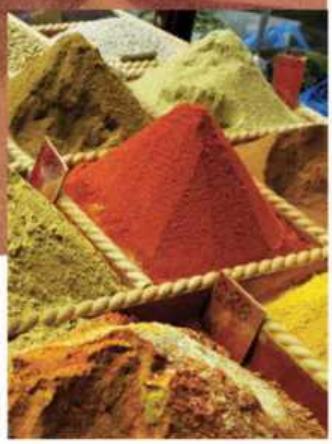
Around the perimeter you will find an embarrassment of culinary riches, with restaurants specialising in local Arabic cuisine, as well as Lebanese, Turkish, Egyptian, Moroccan, Iraqi, Indian, Thai, Malaysian and Italian food. There are cafés too selling spicy Arabic coffee, sweet karak tea and shisha, which you can draw on at











your leisure as you sit and watch the world go by, lulled by the plaintive melodies of a local folk band playing from a nearby restaurant.

A similarly varied menu awaits you in the city's major shopping malls, where you'll find familiar high street shops as well as designer outlets. **City Center Doha** is located right in the heart of **West Bay** among the towering office blocks, and is geared up for families to spend the day. There's a cinema, a funfair, an ice rink and a bowling alley, as well as four floors of retail therapy and just about every fast food outlet you can think of.

Around the corner, only a cab ride away, is **The Gate Mall** which specialises in high-end shopping in an atmosphere of cool, unhurried serenity. And further out, beneath the **Torch**, lies **Villaggio**, which also has an ice rink and a funfair but goes the extra mile with its own Venetian-style canal, complete with gondolas.

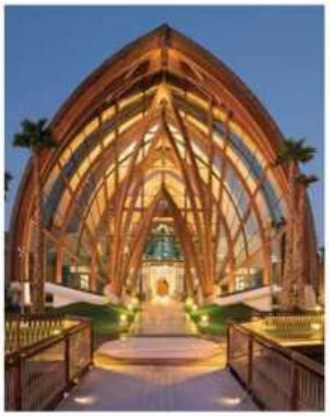
At the end of a long day's shopping you have one more decision to make: where to dine. For avid foodies the **St Regis** offers both the fine dining of **Gordon Ramsay** and the upmarket Cantonese of **Hakkasan**. **Jean-Georges Vongerichten** has two restaurants at the trendy **W Doha Hotel** and the latest star addition is Nobuyuki Matsuhisa's spectacular new Japanese restaurant, **Nobu** at the **Four Seasons Doha**.

If you can't decide, why not stay the week and try them all?

DID YOU KNOW ?

LOCATED OVER THREE FLOORS OF A BEAUTIFUL NEW BUILDING SURROUNDED BY WATER, THE 26,000 SQUARE FOOT NOBU DOHA IS THE LARGEST RESTAURANT IN THE NOBU PORTFOLIO.







THE LAP OF LUXURY

WATER IS A PRICELESS COMMODITY IN QATAR AND THE WARM BLUE WATERS OF THE GULF PROVIDE A SUMPTUOUS SETTING FOR YOUR ACCOMMODATION IN DOHA

The growing interest in Qatar as a destination for business and luxury travel is reflected in Doha's portfolio of five-star hotels. Collectively they provide an outstanding level of hospitality, while each succeeds in retaining its own singular appeal.

You could dedicate an entire holiday to exploring the sumptuous spa menus and fine dining options, but then you might miss out on other entertainments, such as the renowned jazz nights at the **St Regis,** Thursday nights at the popular **Belgian Café** at the **InterContinental** or the deep-sea fishing excursions laid on by the **Grand Hyatt**. Exsus and DialAFlight can help you put together your ideal itinerary.

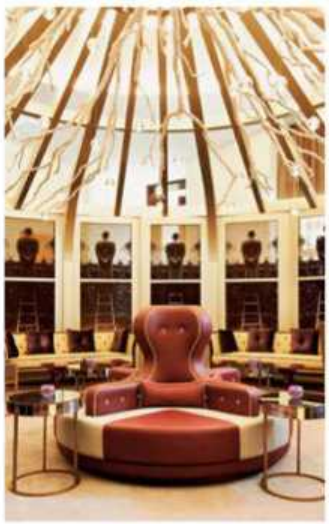
The **St Regis** stands at the northern extremity of Doha, close to the golf club, and from the terrace of your private suite you can take in the whole sweeping curve of the capital – from Katara Cultural Village all the way down the Corniche, and beyond to the airport and the new **Banana Island Resort**. The St Regis and Intercontinental are just the other side of Katara Cultural Village, side by side amid landscaped gardens. All three benefit from extensive private beaches.

The Four Seasons, on the edge of West Bay business district, also has its own beach, from which you can marvel at the newly built **Nobu** at the **Four Seasons Doha**, before retiring to Seasons Tea Lounge for the excellent afternoon tea. A couple of streets away, the urban chic of **W Doha** takes the prize for designer cool and its Extreme WOW suite gives you the kudos of your own private massage room and cocktail bar. If 'urban' is your thing, try one of the nine hotels of the **Souq Waqif Boutique Hotels** group, of which **Al Mirqab** is the largest. Situated at the entrance to the souq, this chic hotel allows you to step out of the hubbub of downtown Doha and be relaxing by the open-air rooftop pool in minutes.



More Arabian style cool, in every sense of the word, can be found at **Ritz-Carlton's Sharq Village and Spa**, just 10 minutes from Hamad International Airport. A study in Qatari hospitality, **The Sharq** (meaning 'east') is laid out in the style of a typical village, with 14 courtyard houses and private beach.

The variety of hospitality options is remarkable but wherever you plump to stay, you'll feel like you've made the right choice.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WELCOME CENTRE, BANANA ISLAND; THE FOUR SEASONS BEACH; EXTREME WOW SUITE, W DOHA; SIX SENSES SPA AT THE SHARQ VILLAGE & SPA; GORDON RAMSAY RESTAURANT, ST REGIS

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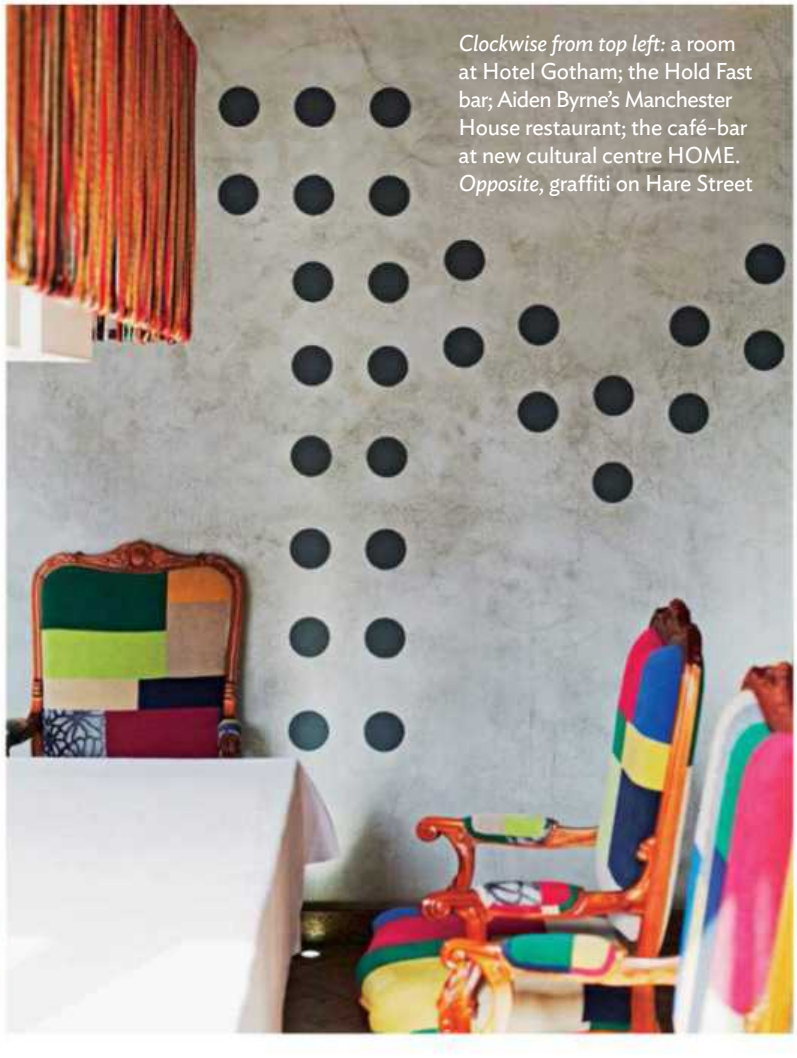
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QATAR AIRWAYS القطرية









Clockwise from top left: a room at Hotel Gotham; the Hold Fast bar; Aiden Byrne's Manchester House restaurant; the café-bar at new cultural centre HOME. *Opposite,* graffiti on Hare Street

OUR SERIES OF INSIDER UK GUIDES CONTINUES WITH...

MANCHESTER

It's where Rolls met Royce and the atom was first split. Now the streetwise northern star is a bit more la-di-da, with everything from Damon Albarn operas to Latin street food. By Emily Mathieson. Photographs by Rita Platts



The first time I arrived here, back in 1995, I headed straight for Old Trafford and booked an over-priced tour of the stadium. Not long afterwards, I moved in, got a job at Maine Road and realised that a) there was a team more deserving of my passions and b) there was more to the city than football.

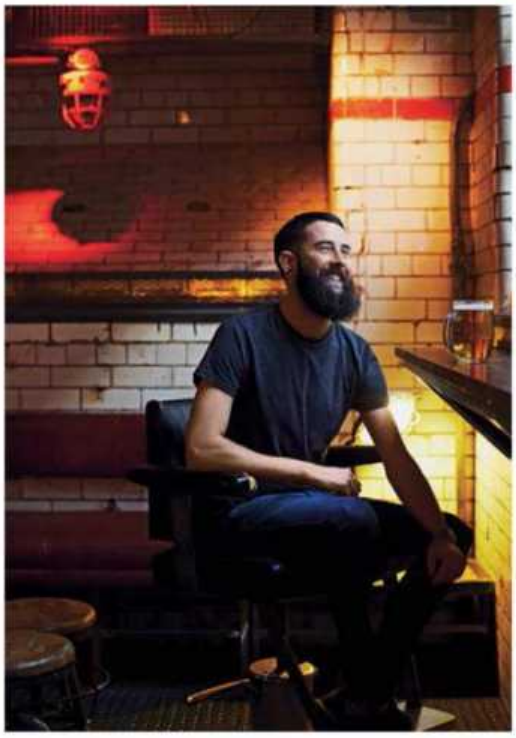
There's also industry: Manchester's still-blackened spires are an atmospheric backdrop to the feverish redevelopment of mill buildings and warehouses into modern work hubs, loft apartments and bars. There's painter LS Lowry and the eponymous gallery on Salford Quays, now accompanied by Media City and Libeskind's impressively designed, and curated, Imperial War Museum. There's computer programming and Alan Turing, whose monument in the Gay Village seems even more poignant in the light of Cumberbatch's recent Oscar nomination.

And, of course, there's nightlife and music. The sweaty days of Madchester may be long gone, but the vinyl geeks who queue all night outside Piccadilly Records to bag rare releases are evidence of a scene still going strong. Musical associations are referenced in everything from building names (Hacienda apartments) to cocktail menus (the Posh). Excellent live venues from jazz joint Matt & Phreds to indie-rock spot The Deaf Institute are the places to see breaking acts before the rest of the country cottons on. I still overtell the story about the time Chris Martin chatted up my friend after one of Coldplay's first-ever performances at the Roadhouse, a key hangout in what was then the grotty Northern Quarter, now the city's coolest neighbourhood.

It's a sign of the times that the Roadhouse closed this summer and is to be replaced by a restaurant from Mary-Ellen McTague, whose significant pedigree (the Fat Duck, Aumbry) signifies Manchester's new image – one with fewer sticky floors and better food. The city is humming with energy as a flurry of high-profile cultural openings help it redefine itself for the 21st century – an era in which you can see avant-garde photography alongside Arts & Crafts fabric at the revamped Whitworth Gallery or where HOME, a new multi-arts venue, shows progressive drama, cinema and art. Despite these refinements, there's still plenty of northern soul.









WHERE TO STAY

MAKE THE GRADE

The **Great John Street** was formerly a Victorian school and there are still architectural references to its past in the double-height rooms – original wooden floors and huge schoolhouse windows – which are now decorated in a Shoreditch-loft-meets English-country-house style. The decade-old hotel is showing its age round the edges, but the roof terrace is stunning – with views over Granada Studios and the *Corrie* set – and the location is quiet but handy for the chic side of town. The group behind it is set to open a more refined central property, the **King Street Townhouse**, with a rooftop pool. *www.eclectichotels.co.uk; doubles from £90*

HIGH IDEAS

Traditionally the city's go-to smart stay, **The Lowry** is accessed by a Calatrava-designed bridge across the Irwell, on whose banks the glass-fronted building sits. The river restaurant is charming in summer and the modern rooms (sleek and neutral with pops of orange or blue) are still a favourite with visiting footballers and pop stars. *www.thelowryhotel.com; doubles from £119*

SAFE CHOICE

It's often a worry when a hotel proclaims its personality too loudly before arrival. And the banking-meets-New York theme at the new **Hotel Gotham** on King Street is anything but subtle – batwing biscuits at turndown and gold bullion bars for decoration, for example. But there's a smile-making sense of fun here and a touching mix of swagger and verve that is much like the city itself. Ignore the top-floor rooms (leather bedheads, windowless, a bit *50 Shades*) in favour of a classic double with floor-to-





Clockwise from right: Northern Soul Grilled Cheese; out and about in the Northern Quarter; the Hold Fast bar; exhibition at the city's new cultural centre HOME; table football at fashion boutique Flannels; Hold Fast; cocktail at Keko Moku; a room at the Jazz Age-inspired Hotel Gotham on King Street





ceiling windows, zingy chevron carpets and pink-lined wardrobes. *www.hotelgotham.co.uk; doubles from £150*

WHERE TO EAT

PLAYING IT COOL

At **Home Sweet Home**, tattooed spectacled types and their Vans-clad kids come out to play early over shakes, cakes and blueberry pancakes in a Fifties-meets-cabin-chic diner. Across town, **1847** is a gem of a vegetarian restaurant with a Scandi feel and innovative, ethical fare such as beer-battered halloumi with lemon curd, and leek crepes with spiced sticky red cabbage. *homesweethomenq.com. www.by1847.com; about £55 for two*

CLASS ACTS

There was an outcry this year when Simon Rogan's **The French**, in a beautifully panelled room in the Midland Hotel, once again failed to win a Michelin star. No matter: dishes such as a kale crisp stacked with venison, Westcombe cheese and cabbage served on earthernware crockery are still the best in the city. Similarly expensive, but in a more happening (and lofty) environment, is **Manchester House**, Aiden Byrne's foodie hotspot of the moment. Go for the butch flavours and sunset cocktails with a Pennines view. *www.the-french.co.uk; menus from £50. www.manchesterhouse.uk.com; about £120 for two*

SOUL FOOD

For a hearty fast-food fix, **Northern Soul Grilled Cheese** dishes up meatballs and pulled pork to a rare-groove soundtrack, alongside moreish, grilled-cheese sarnies. It's a tiny space with a corrugated iron hatch and two barrels for tables. Music-loving locals gather at **Gorilla**, part gallery, part gig venue and part all-day hang-out. Downstairs there are burgers, grilled chicken and the full English served on tin plates; upstairs are hand-crafted, artisanal (of course) gin cocktails; with music in an under-the-railway-arches gig space out back. *www.northernsoulmcr.com; about £10 for two. www.thisisgorilla.com; about £55 for two*

WHERE TO DRINK

SHAKER MAKER

Manchester has been surprisingly bereft of top-notch cocktail bars. **The Alchemist** and **Mr Coopers**, in The Midland, bucked the trend with a grown-up, original outlook and creative concoctions such as the Socio Relapse (referencing the death of a much-loved local bar with watermelon, pomegranate, orange blossom, vodka and absinthe), plus seasonal cocktails on tap, but look set to be usurped by the recently opened **Brass**. This rooftop, bronze-panelled bar at the top of Hotel Gotham is only open to guests or members and their friends, ➤







From left: Dolce & Gabanna trainers at Flannels; local style in the Northern Quarter; diner-style milkshakes and cakes at Home Sweet Home

but is worth wangling your way in for the simple, carefully considered menu and the best Martinis in town, courtesy of Dutch barman Barry Van Goethem. *www.thealchemist.uk.com. www.mrcoopershouseandgarden.co.uk*

24-HOUR PARTY PEOPLE

The Northern Quarter is where most of the city's best drinking action happens. You could happily bar hop for eight blocks or so heading east from Thomas or Edge streets, stopping in at **Keko Moku** (tiki and cool kitsch), **Hold Fast** (underneath a hostel but hipster heaven) or **Ply** (an edgy pizza joint fitted out with, yes, plywood furniture) and ending up in the speakeasy-style **Fitzgerald** (craft cocktails, velvet chesterfields). When you're tired of all those trendy young things, join the old men at **The Castle** on Oldham Street, a classic boozer so loved by Elbow frontman Guy Garvey that he created a real ale especially for it. *@kekumoku. www.hattershostels.com/hold-fast-bar. www.plymcr.co.uk. www.thefitzgeraldnq.co.uk. www.thecastlehotel.info*

MAKE US A BREW

The simple pleasure of a cuppa has been elevated to an art form, with various leaves and blends being stirred in some lovely spots around the city. Take yours from vintage-style crockery at **Sugar Junction**, beneath industrial light fittings at **North Tea Power**, or in the *Alice-in-Wonderland*-themed **Richmond Tea Rooms** in a Gay Village backstreet. *www.sugarjunction.co.uk. www.northteapower.co.uk. www.richmondtearooms.com*

WHERE TO SHOP

SHARP SUITER

The best place for label lovers wanting a more curated collection than what's on offer at Harvey Nichols and Selfridges is **Flannels**, a city stalwart that's recently opened a huge store in the shiny Spinningfields complex. This is where the style set go to pick up their Mulberry, Dolce & Gabbana and Miu Miu. However, you'll be much better catered for if you like retro. The city is seventh heaven for vintage lovers, especially **Afflecks Palace** on Church Street (see the great mural outside: And on the Sixth Day, God created Manchester), a multi-storey thrift emporium full of everything from Sixties wigs and boots to Forties dresses, plus cyborg costumes and other bonkers stuff. *www.flannels.com. www.afflecks.com*

CRAFTY FOLK

Just round the corner from Afflecks Palace, **Fig and Sparrow** is the kind of shop most of us would open if only we had the imagination. Up front, Scandi-inspired homewares including hand-printed bags, coloured tea pots, wooden toys and cards are displayed on wooden shelving; at the back, its little on-site bakery serves fresh bread and Ringtons tea and coffee. For charmingly imperfect pottery and local art, vases and textiles, the **Manchester Craft & Design Centre** is a home for independent producers in the city's former Victorian fish market – and has its own café for when you've done browsing. *www.figandsparrow.co.uk. www.craftanddesign.com*

CHECK IT OUT

ART FIX

It's impossible to ignore the creative renaissance happening right now – FKA Twigs' installations for the Manchester International Festival this summer were a real coup. At the recently reopened parkside **Whitworth Art Gallery**, the excellent collection ranges from YBA photographs by Johnnie Shand Kydd to William Morris fabrics. **HOME** opened this year, too, as the successor to the Cornerhouse cinema/gallery and Library Theatre. This impressive cultural hub is the spot to catch indie films, experimental stagings and new art. Or book tickets for plays in the round from the more mainstream but still intriguing programme at the **Royal Exchange** (Maxine Peak played a female Hamlet last year). *www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk. www.homemcr.org. www.royalexchange.co.uk*

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

If you can't beat them, join them – the **National Football Museum**, inside a tall triangular building next to the cathedral, is a surprising delight, with its interactive exhibits, historical insight and practical sessions. For the hardened United fan, match-day packages at **Hotel Football** next to Old Trafford are hard to beat – as they all involve the chance to meet Gary, Ryan, Paul, Phil and Nicky in the hotel they helped create. If you don't know their surnames, this is just another themed place to stay. If you do, it's the stuff of legend. *www.nationalfootballmuseum.com. www.hotelfootball.com*

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Spoil family or friends with 50% off the Velvet Rose Christmas bouquet at Appleyard Flowers. This luxury bouquet – of velvet red roses, fragrant, deep pink oriental lilies, deep water roses and glossy red hypericum berries is now just £24.98 (RRP £49.99). To redeem, simply visit www.appleyardflowers.com/CNtraveller and enter code CNTRAVEL50 at the checkout. Valid from 02.11.15 – 23.12.15. Subject to availability. Terms and conditions apply.



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FLAVOUR HUNTER

Food and drink fixes from Paris Palm Springs Singapore Italy

EDITED BY **FIONA KERR**

TABLE TO BOOK

Paris is brewing up a storm in very chic teacups

France was relatively late on the craft-coffee bandwagon that came from Australia to London via Portland, and finally drew up in Paris at the likes of Holybelly. Now tea is staging its own revival, and Marais café Lily of the Valley was quick to catch on, serving organic blends such as chocolate-roasted yerba mate and milky oolong. The interior resembles a floral cocoon – *Alice in Wonderland* meets English country garden. It's a pretty twist on the ubiquitous stripped-back aesthetic *www.facebook.com/lilyofthevalleyparis* LINDSEY TRAMUTA

PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO PINARELLI



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE

To make pickled squash, first put into a pan 475ml of **cider vinegar** and the same again of **water**, 375g of **sugar**, one **cinnamon** stick, 10 **allspice berries** and 10 **black peppercorns**, three **dried chillies** and 2cm of peeled, chopped **ginger root**. Bring to the boil, stirring to help the sugar dissolve. Add 750g of **butternut squash flesh**, cut into elegant wedges or half moons with the seeds and skin discarded. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. Divide between several hot, sterilised one-litre jars (or a number of small ones to have the option to give some as presents) and pour over the syrup and spices. Add a splash of **sherry** for an extra kick if you like. Once open, keep in the fridge.

Photograph by **David Loftus**

WORLD ON A PLATE

THE INGREDIENT: PICKLES

EAT ME

By **Joanna Weinberg**

Some days aren't for cooking at all. Because you've cooked too much already, or you're too full or too hungry, or the fridge is empty, or you had an extra glass of wine the night before and simply can't be bothered. Unfortunately, that won't wash with the six guests arriving for lunch.

There are tricks to turning an old corner of cheese into a feast that doesn't include going to a fancy deli. It's all about what goes on the side. On a Sunday night a stick of celery or a few salad leaves and crackers can suffice. But it you need to put on a show, the best way is to add something homemade. Long live the pickle.

A winter picnic, ploughman's or (un)packed lunch is common to everyone. The best I ever had was while sitting on a ledge halfway up a mountain, the Pyrenees spread out before me. It was just a hunk of local sheep's cheese, a handful of salt-cured olives, some lightly pickled cucumber and the end of a loaf of bread, crumpled from the bottom of a backpack after a morning's trudge. In India it may come in a tiffin tin, in Buckingham Palace a Tupperware tub, but wherever you are, the magic ingredient will most likely be brined, cured, smoked or pickled.

Every culture has its way of preserving food. As a loose rule, look north and you will usually find the fixer to be vinegar or smoke: the soused herrings of Sweden, the smoked salmon of Scotland, the pickled beetroot of Ukraine. Look south and it will more often be salt: the cured hams of Spain and Italy, the salted fish of Portugal, the preserved lemons of the Middle East.

Whichever direction you face, and even if it is simply home, the upsides to adding some kind of a pickle are manifold. The

WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE MAGIC INGREDIENT FOR A PACKED LUNCH IS OFTEN SMOKED OR BRINED

first is that you can find it on your shelf. Agreed, there may be a few steps involved in getting it there, but you can take these when it suits you. The next is it gives colour to a spread that probably consists of 50 shades of beige. Most important of all, though, is that pickles – the good ones at least – offer up all the cornerstones of flavour in one fell swoop: sharpness, sweetness, salt and heat. So next time you are wondering what to do with plums or pears past their prime, or an unloved squash lurking in the corner, break out the vinegar. By the time you eat it, the effort involved will be forgotten and you will be suffused with a sense of smug satisfaction at your superior housekeeping skills.

DRINK ME

By **Malcolm Gluck**

The wine for pickled squash on its own doesn't exist, so fancy a really great beer? My choice is **Five Hop Lager** (£1.95 for a 330ml bottle) from Marks & Spencer. Expertly brewed by a small company in Surrey, it's deliciously malty and hoppy.

If you pair the squash with cheese, however, and go for a blue like gorgonzola, then a sweet wine may be served. Sticking with the same retailer, an excellent choice is **Martinez Marsala Superiore Riserva** (£6.49 for a half bottle). This five-year-old brown wine, fortified lightly with brandy, is reminiscent of baked figs with a hint of crème fraîche. It has a celebratory edge and perfect seasonality. As do the wines of Hans Herzog. In introducing them to you I have a confession to make: ever since I began this column a

THIS WINE IS SUPERB WITH SPICY FOOD AND WILL LIFT THE MOST INDIGO OF BLUE MOODS

few years back I've been itching to write about Hans's wines but they haven't been available in the UK. Now they are, and if you treasure individuality they're for you.

He grows his grapes in an organic vineyard, surrounding his wife Therese's wonderful cellar-door restaurant, in Marlborough: the home of New Zealand's most famous Sauvignon Blancs. His take on this grape is not cheap (£31.95, in the 2012 vintage), but it's uniquely his own, for it shows mango, apricot and gooseberry with a creamy texture. It's as unlike the usual grassy Kiwi liquid as can be imagined. I can think of pricey white Burgundies with less concentration.

The other Hans white is also a rarity, for the grape, Arneis, is usually found only in its birthplace in northern Italy. Hans's interpretation (**Arneis 2013**, £29.95) is delicate yet profound, and demands at least three hours decanting to bring out all its myriad subtleties. Not so his **Zweigelt 2012** (£34.95), made from the astounding Austrian grape – created by Fritz Zweigelt – which leaps from glass to mouth with immediacy and élan. It's superb with spicy food and will lift the most indigo of blue moods.

More reflective is **Spirit of Marlborough 2005** (£36.95), a mature Merlot/Cabernet blend with a rich chocolate undertone. Lastly, there is **Montepulciano 2011** (£36.95). This is a velvety red, reminiscent of cherry liqueur but with a brisk yet genteel background of tannin. It is adult, subtle, yet unpretentiously emphatic. Hans Herzog wines can be found at Berry Brothers & Rudd (www.bbr.com). They are unfined and unfiltered, with a brooding quality. Drink them, then, with refined souls who appreciate class in a glass.







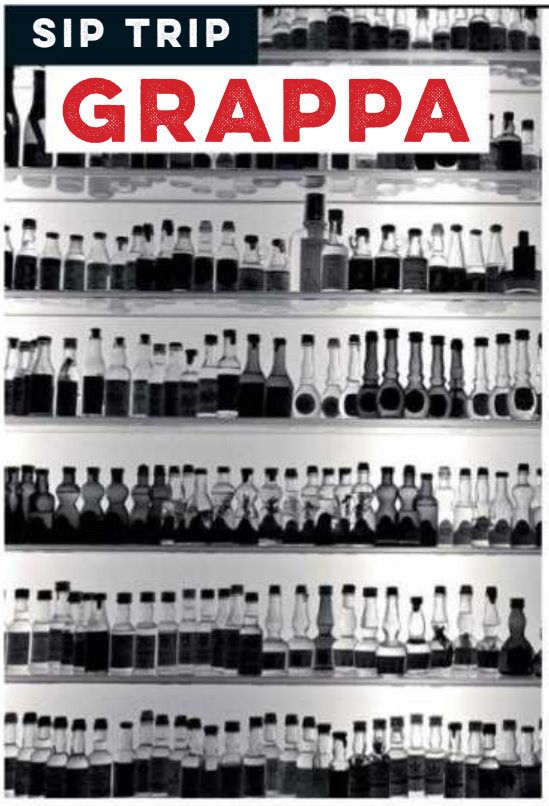
ART FEED

Photographer and art director Vanessa McKeown creates pop-art food using objects collected from her London home, but her palette is pure Palm Springs. 'The blue of the sky, the emerald palms and the pastel architecture all find their way into my work. I particularly love the candy-pink exterior at kitsch diner Tropicale, where they serve delicious Mojitos and the most amazing mile-high chocolate cake.'

www.vanessamckeown.com

TABITHA JOYCE



SIP TRIP

GRAPPA

Certain drinks, like certain neighbourhoods, are more resistant to gentrification than others. It's not that the hipsters will never discover them – they'll get there in the end – but they'll go elsewhere first. Drinks-wise, grappa, the humble Italian brandy, is one of these. It has remained stubbornly uncool for at least 600 years.

In a way, it's the anti-Aperol. Aperol, as you won't have failed to notice, made a spectacular comeback not long ago. Suddenly its lurid orange glow – redolent of a smiling, sun-kissed Italy, chic and fun and flirty – was everywhere. Grappa, by contrast, was never about whooping it up in the good times. It was about doggedly getting through the bad times. Farm labourers in the north knocked it back with a grimace to banish the cold and quell hunger pangs.

Detractors sniff that it's merely wrung from the skins, pips, stems and other detritus left over after grapes have been pressed to make

FARM LABOURERS KNOCKED IT BACK TO BANISH THE COLD AND QUELL HUNGER

wine. Well, so what? All spirits are peasant drinks, historically. Even the grandest of them are made from agricultural by-products – whisky, gin and vodka from barley or grain, rum from sugarcane. And what the naysayers generally neglect to mention is the way grappa comes into its own when it's not on its own. Lately clever mixologists have seen its potential as a cocktail ingredient. The grappa-and-espresso-based Grappacino, for instance, is a logical extension of the traditional *caffè corretto* or 'corrected coffee' – espresso turbo-charged with a splash of rocket fuel. Grappa's long history of deeply Italian uncoolness may be coming to an end. There goes the neighbourhood. STEVE KING

PHOTOGRAPHS: VANESSA MCKEOWN; DANIEL PERAZZONE


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Eat the street

It was once part of Singapore's red-light district but Keong Saik Road has cleaned up its act and become a beacon of the city's funky food scene – as well as home to its most need-to-know chefs



9.30AM: BREAKFAST

Luxe, No 1

On the ground floor of new creative hub The Working Capitol, this Sydney import channels its Aussie vibe into both the decor (white and blonde wood) and the breakfast menu (health hits such as quinoa and chia-seed pudding with coconut yogurt). *www.luxesydney.sg*

11AM: COFFEE

The Daily Roundup, No 1

In the same building, this hip café ships in organic buckwheat flour from Brittany for its galettes and crepes. But it's coffee from local roasters Papa Palheta that kick-starts the creatives' day. *www.thedailyroundup.com.sg*

1.30PM: LUNCH

Cure, No 21

Chef Andrew Walsh – formerly of Pollen Street Social and Esquina – turns seasonal produce into delicate dishes (Galway Bay oyster and beef tartare) with a nod to his Irish background. The evening tasting menus at this bistro are a hit, but lunchtime is a bargain. *www.curesingapore.com*

4PM: JUICE

Afterglow, No 24

The clean-eating movement has hit Singapore and for a virtuous pick-me-up, call in for a cold-pressed juice at this vegan, raw-food café. On the way out, shop for eco-shampoo. *www.afterglow.sg*

6.30PM: SUNDOWNER

Potato Head Folk, No 36

An offshoot of the hit Bali beach spot, this eclectic bar-and-burger joint, *above*, is spread across three floors of a red-shuttered shophouse. The rooftop garden is the prime spot to sip a Saik Daiquari (La Mauny rum, Plantation 3 Stars rum, mirin wine, sweetened *yuzu* and fresh lime) and watch the sun dip across the city. *www.pttheadfolk.com*

8PM: DINNER

Burnt Ends, 20 Teck Lim Road

On the corner where Keong Saik meets Teck Lim Road sits Australian barbecue-spot Burnt Ends, which entered at number 30 in this year's Asia's 50 Best Restaurants. Take a ringside seat at the countertop facing the apple- and almond-wood-fired ovens where Chef Dave Pynt and his team whip up smoked quail's eggs and pulled-pork shoulder. *www.burntends.com.sg*

10PM: DRINKS

The Library, No 47

You'll need the week's password to enter this clandestine drinking den, hidden behind an inconspicuous tailor shop (hint: ask at next-door sister restaurant, Jason Atherton's The Study). Inside, a secret door leads to the retro-glam bar where cocktails are served up in quirky drinking vessels including a mini bathtub for four to share. *www.the-study.sg* LAUREN HILL



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HOW TO

TAKE COCKTAILS TO THE NEXT LEVEL

For the world's most creative bartenders, it's all about craft cocktails. Sigrid Ehm from Vienna's Hammond Bar, who was this year's winner of Bombay Sapphire's Most Imaginative Bartender award, shares her shaking secrets

MORE THAN BOOZE

'To make a cocktail more interesting, use different kinds of bitters. As well as Angostura, try cucumber and peach – a few drops can transform a G&T or a Martini. Or make your own syrups and infusions with in-season fruit, herbs and spices – and taste, taste, taste as you mix.'

THE ART OF GLASS

'The right drinking vessel is almost as important as the ingredients. The Martini glass, for example, prevents the ingredients from separating, while highball glasses make sure less surface liquid is exposed to the air – so that carbonated cocktails stay fizzy for longer.'

GO LARGE FOR A PARTY

'Mix a big batch ahead of time, then just add bitters, ice and garnish when your guests arrive. Classic eggnog is a wintery winner. Add flair by finishing with a few cranberries or a hint of marmalade.'

For more information visit www.bombaysapphire.com



Under the grill

MATTHEW RHYS

The Welsh star of *The Americans* and *Brothers & Sisters* plays a top chef in his latest film, *Burnt*. He picks his real-life foodie greats

SPLURGE TREAT? 'As soon as I land at Heathrow I head straight to Dean Street Townhouse in Soho, where I gorge myself on the kind of traditional British classics I can't find in New York. But for old-school elegance by the jeroboam, I like The Wolseley on Piccadilly. It has the glamour to make you want to put on a suit and order something special at the bar before dinner. But it is also relaxed enough for Sunday brunch with a Bloody Mary and a newspaper.'

STREET EAT? 'There's a food truck called Dosa Royale at the Smorgasburg food market in Brooklyn that is worth crossing the Atlantic for. They do all sorts of dosa, from classic curried potato to spinach and homemade paneer, topped with an egg and "gunpowder" sauce.'

SIGNATURE DISH? 'Every March, a group of us get together to roast a whole lamb basted heavily in *salmuera* (brine). Eaten with hulks of bread and lashings of red wine, it's an epicurean experience.'

GO-TO DRINK? 'It depends on my mood, the temperature and the time of year. Favourites are a pint of Guinness, a Martini, Côtes du Rhône or Penderyn whisky from Wales.'

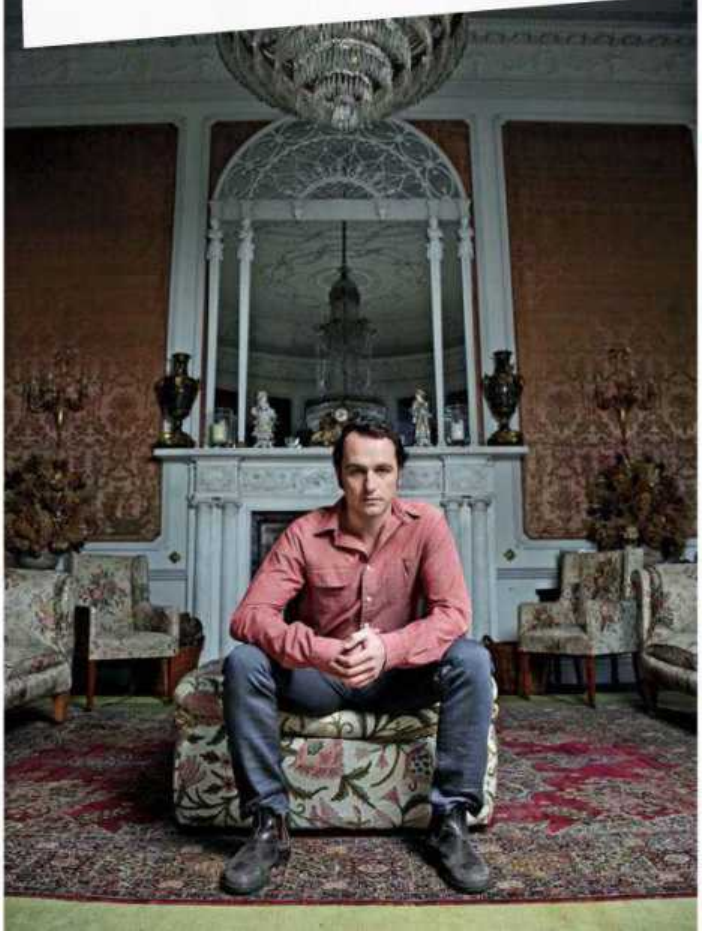
FOOD TO FLY FOR? 'Patagonia for the beef and, even more so, the lamb cooked over a fire, *asado*-style.'

STRANGEST SIP? 'Mare's milk in Mongolia – it actually got me drunk as it was fermented.'

DESERT ISLAND INGREDIENTS? 'Good coffee, harissa and Maldon sea salt.'

GUILTY PLEASURE? 'Take a frozen Snickers ice-cream bar, microwave it just enough to melt the chocolate, sprinkle with sea salt and don't tell anyone. Including your arteries.'

'Burnt' is in cinemas from 6 November



PHOTOGRAPHS: JESSICA ALEXANDER/IMAGEBRIEF.COM; CHRIS MCANDREW/CAMERA PRESS; OLIVER PERROTT/GAP INTERIORS



Heavenly

HAHNENKAMM

Hit some legendary slopes by day, then hide away with family and friends in one of Austria's most luxurious private-chalet retreats for pampered nights of bliss



Cosy interiors, disarmingly personal service, glorious views: set 1,645 metres up the mountainside, blending harmoniously into its unique location, the Hahnenkamm Lodge has it all. And that's before discovering you are but a snap-in-and-slide-down's distance from the starting point of Kitzbühel's legendary Hahnenkamm race. Small wonder the Hahnenkamm Lodge was recently nominated 'World's Best New Ski Chalet 2015' at the World Ski Awards.



Yes, the Hahnenkamm Lodge epitomises the ultimate ski-in/ski-out private luxury adventure for families and friends. By day, the in-house certified ski guide happily takes guests off for anything from novice swing turns in virgin snow to free-ride tours off spectacular slopes. There are over 50 cable cars and lifts, 170 kilometres of perfectly- groomed slopes, superb off-piste possibilities and the world-famous Streif to discover here, in what is often referred to as, 'the best ski resort in the world'. Away from the pistes there's also hiking in snowshoes across the soft, white blanket of this winter wonderland, or magical torch-lit walks that kids will love (not to mention summertime cycling and hiking trails to awe-inspiring viewpoints; paragliding; climbing; high-rope course adventures; canyoning; rafting; archery, and special children's programmes in and by the water – these multi-faceted mountains make for wonderfully multifarious adventures).

Come evening, it's back to Hahnenkamm Lodge to wind down and relax with friends and family in your exclusive chalet, where the warmth of natural, local materials and muted colours ensconce you in an atmosphere of unabashed wellbeing and relaxation – its mountainside position ensures rare, uninterrupted peace. Sore muscles after a day spent snaking down the slopes? The in-room whirlpools, spa and gym areas, with Finnish pine wood – invite you to wind down weary muscles and recharge your batteries in private. A hearty appetite after a day in that freshest of fresh air? Extraordinary Austrian-influenced culinary creations, emphasising natural, regional products, are the order of every day here. And when you're feeling fully refreshed, fabulously fed and almost ready for your duck-down-duvet covered bed, there can be few moments more memorable than sitting on Hahnenkamm Lodge's terrace with the towering silhouettes of the mountains all around, a crystal-clear galaxy of stars overhead, and a mantle of the softest silence cloaking you as you ponder over the day's adventures – and plan those that are yet to come. Heavenly? Definitely.



Clockwise from main: The extensive Hahnenkamm Suite; Bunkbeds in the Children's suite; Bathroom in the Horn Suite; The cosy open bar

For details and reservations, please visit hahnenkamm-lodge.com



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COLOURS OF India

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PROMOTIONS

The kaleidoscopic pull of India is undeniable – there is nowhere in the world more visually tantalising. Entire cities shine in bold hues of pink and blue. Blink and you will miss the flutter of a neon sari on the back of a bike or the fierce, turquoise flash of a kingfisher. Go in search of the elusive tiger's stripes in the verdant jungles, view the multi-coloured temples of Tamil Nadu, and bask in the shadows of the inky Himalayas. Even the gleaming white marble of the mighty Taj Mahal holds visitors spellbound by the way it changes shades throughout the day – glowing red at dawn, shimmering silver in the moonlight.

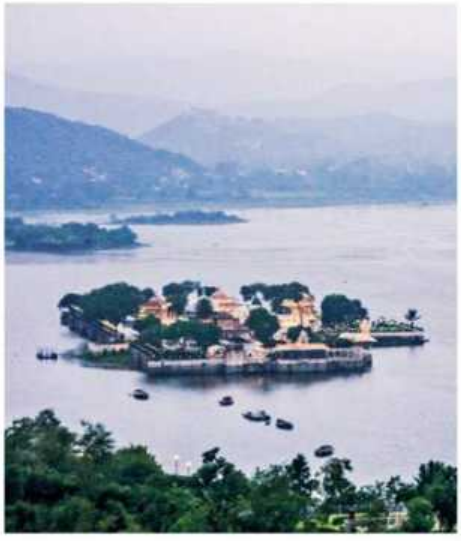
However, colour here is not just surface. Its expression encompasses culture, tradition and faith. Red is not only associated with the Hindu Goddess Durga and fiery chillies, it is also synonymous with power and knowledge and is the predominant colour in the Hindu wedding ceremony. In Jaipur, history has it that the entire city was painted pink in welcome for the Prince of Wales in 1876. Visit Amritsar and you will find the most sacred of Sikh shrines – the Golden Temple, which stands glistening yellow in the heat. Blue also holds special religious significance and several Hindu gods are often depicted in various hues. Yet, since all colours ultimately merge, it is white that is the sign of purity.

Words Indira Tandan

HOT PINK

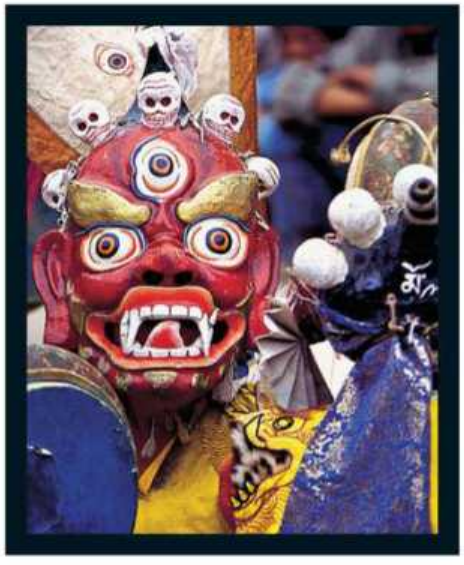


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EVENING AT THE PARK CALANGUTE GOA; THE LOTUS FLOWER, A SACRED SYMBOL IN INDIA; SET UP FOR A ROYAL GATHERING, MARWAR HALL, TAJ UMAID BHAWAN PALACE; PAINTED EFFIGIES AT CELEBRATIONS IN LADAKH, AERIAL VIEW, TAJ LAKE PALACE



Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights is a sparkling affair that sets the whole country ablaze with fireworks, sweetmeats and a million diyas (lamps) that are cast out on the various seas, lakes and rivers. For a sight to remember stay at the ethereal **Taj Lake Palace** and watch both the lake and sky set afire.

Uncover intriguing regional festivals, such as Hemis, the colourful Buddhist festival in Ladakh, experience it in true style with **Abercrombie & Kent**, staying at the **Ultimate Travelling Camp**, which is also present at the tribal Hornbill Festival in Nagaland. In Kerala Thrissur Puram, sees elephants decorated with gold ornaments and ceremonial umbrellas as they parade down to the Vadakkunnathan Temple. In West Bengal the potters are busy at work creating large life-sized idols for Durga Puja, which are



housed in temporary bamboo temples before being immersed in the river. In Maharasthra it is the elephant headed god of wisdom that is celebrated at Ganesha Chaturthi. There too, large effigies are erected some several storeys high, and then immersed in the sea. On a more contemporary note Goa is well established for its New Year Eve celebrations so party the night away at **The Park Goa Calangute**, or relax at the luxurious **Leela Goa**



set in the sedate south. In Rajasthan, both Jodhpur Rajasthan International Folk Festival and The World Sufi Festival are well worth experiencing, see the magnificent **Taj Umaid Bhawan Palace** come to life as it plays host to many of the events. The Pushkar Camel Fair is similarly legendary for its colourful scenes at the auspicious full moon festival. In neighboring Gujarat enjoy the festivities



of Navratri, where people perform devotional songs and dances, which carry on throughout the night.

The Kumbh Mela is the most religious festival, considered the largest mass gathering on earth. It takes place every three years with the twelfth year being particularly auspicious, drawing crowds of up to 80 million pilgrims, saints and sadhus.

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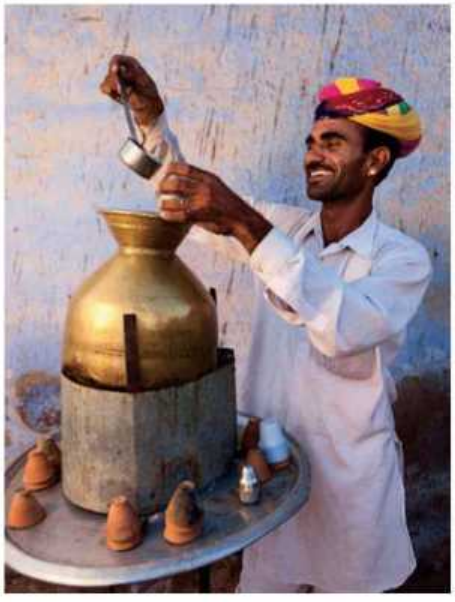
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SAFFRON



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OBEROI RAJVILAS, JAIPUR; A BALTI DISH; ONE OF THE MANY CHURCHES ON THE KERALA BACKWATERS; SPICES IN A LOCAL MARKET; STREET VENDOR WITH MASALA CHAI



Saffron – auspicious, sacred and seductive. Famed the world over for its cuisine, India can entice visitors for its gastronomic journeys alone. Begin with the smouldering tandoors and slow-cooked, meaty delights of Rajasthan. Then travel to Lucknow, for its Awadhi cuisine – rich in mutton, paneer and robust spices. Head west to snack-obsessed Gujarat for vegetarian delights or to West Bengal for subtle bhekti-fish curries and sweet mithai. Hyderabad, the most southern stronghold of the Mughal empire, is renowned for its fragrant biryanis, Goa, for spiced seafood and coconut curries. Both Kerala and Tamil Nadu offer distinctive cuisine, from tantalising vegetarian thalis and idlis, to delicious dosas and pungent, peppery Chettinad masalas.

Join one of **Cox & Kings**' culinary tours to Kerala and browse for spices in the markets

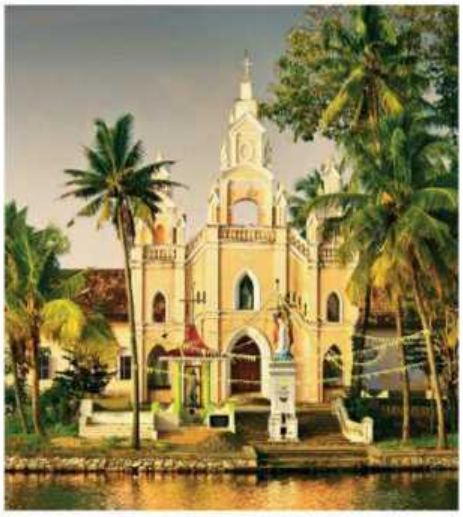


then master Keralan classics with local chefs. Finish off your meal with one of the many sweet offerings – from the plump, pastel-hued mithai, to the syrupy coils of deep fried jalebis and gulab jamuns – the drunken, sugary doughballs. A kulfi ice cream, lightly flavoured with pistachio or mango, will soothe away the Indian heat.

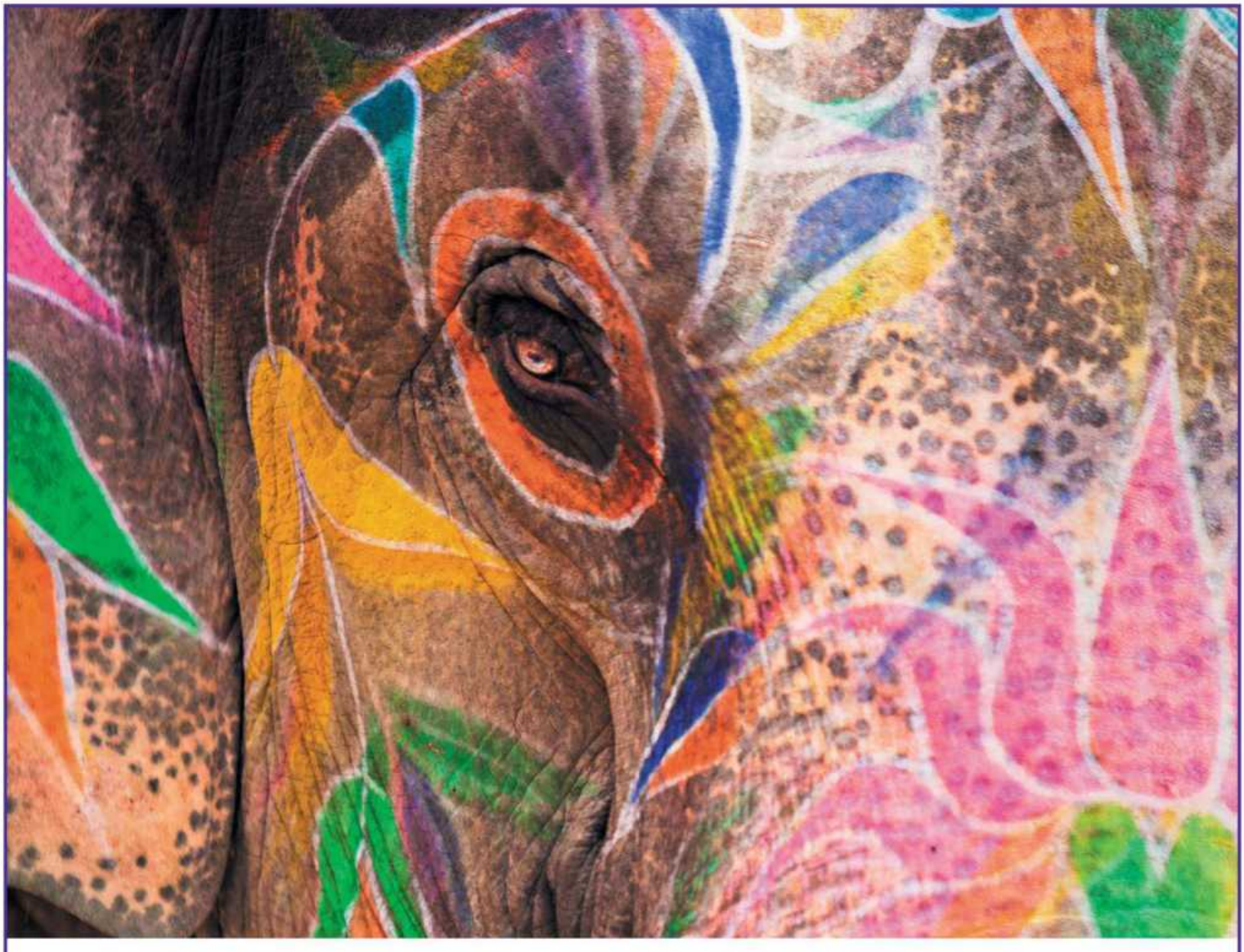
Mumbai is considered the gourmet capital of India with its extraordinary array of luxury hotels,



restaurants, food markets, street stalls and historic cafés. Watch the carnival unfold at dusk on 'Chowpatty' beach when locals take their evening stroll among the colourful vendors peddling bhel puri, pani puri, sizzling 'Mumbai sandwich' and pav bhaji. Head to Swati Snacks for a taste of street food or to famous hippie hang-out Leopold Café. For dinner, head to Trishna – a historic and intimate



seafood restaurant or stop by fine-dining hot spot Indigo. Bukhara is considered one of India's best-known restaurants, situated at the **ITC Maurya Hotel** in New Delhi, the culinary institution is still providing its famous north-western style of tandoor after 35 years. Over at **The Oberoi Rajvilas**, Jaipur guests can try their hand at preparing traditionally Rajasthani dishes under the close supervision of world-class chefs. Spice up your life indeed.



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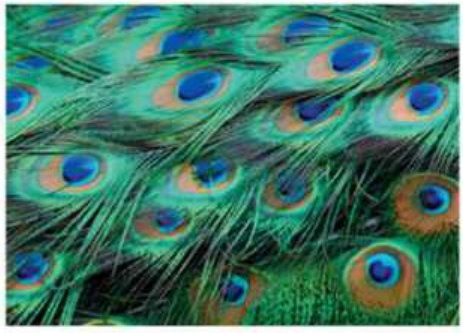
PEACOCK BLUE

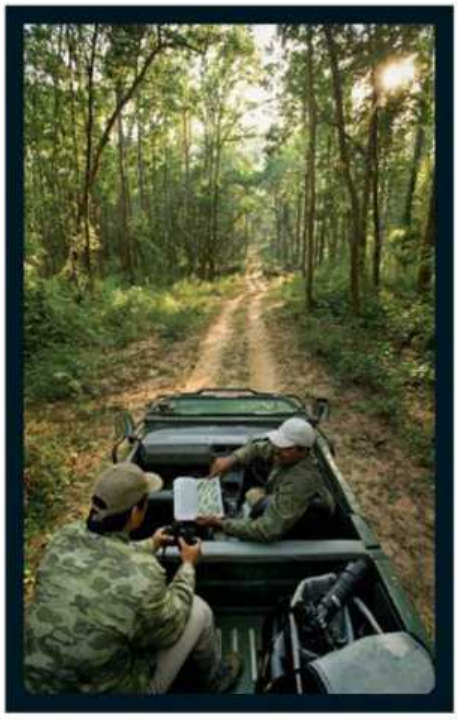






CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 'TENT DECK' GUEST ROOM, BANJAAR TOLA; THE RED-VENTED BULBUL IS NATIVE TO SOUTHERN ASIA; BANDHAVGARH SUITE, MAHUA KOTHI; THE RANTHAMBONE BAR LOUNGE, OBEROI VANYAVILAS; INTERPRETIVE SAFARI EXPERIENCE, BANJAAR TOLA; PEACOCK FEATHERS, THE PLUMAGE OF INDIA'S NATIONAL BIRD



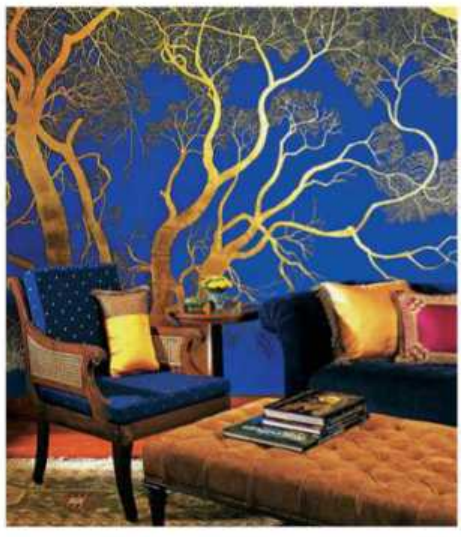


India's landscape is carpeted in thick, verdant jungle and forest. From the craggy foothills of the Himalayas to the rolling patchwork spice plantations and humid interiors of the south, the country is home to some of the world's most varied and vibrant species of wildlife. Go in search of the lofty, ghostlike snow leopards in Ladakh, the last remaining wild Asiatic lions of Gujarat or the elusive Bengal tiger. As you journey, hear the screech of the monkey and witness the iridescent blue beauty of India's national bird, the peacock. Create your very own jungle book and find the one-horned rhino at Kaziranga National Park, or herds of wandering elephants in the rainforests of the south. Both Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala and Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka, have impressive herds – along with the mighty Indian bison, leopard, wild boar and deer. There is also a stunning array of birdlife.

India is estimated to be home to around 70 per cent of the world's wild tigers and a population rise of 30 per cent was recently announced. Wildlife tourism is a vital tool in their conservation so it makes sense to travel with a TOFTigers (travel operators for tigers) member such as **greavesindia.com** to help ensure that you are visiting the most sustainable lodges.

Corbett National Park will see **The Park Corbett** opening this autumn. It will be the first branded luxury hotel to open in the grounds, with a prime position and all-year access. In Rajasthan, you can visit the scenic Ranthambore National Park and stay at the boutique **Sher Bagh** with its delightful campfire-dining, or, escape the wild elements at the lavish **Oberoi Vanyavilas, Ranthambhore** with its luxurious, regal tents. Venture to the remote Pali region for the sumptuous **Jawai Leopard Camp**.

Travel into the heart of the jungle in Madhya Pradesh, where Taj Group has several luxury eco lodges including **Banjaar Tola** in Kanha, perched on the edge of the pretty Banjaar River, and **Mahua Kothi** in Bandhavgarh. You will also find the charming independent **Samode Safari** in Bandhavgarh. In Pench, you can even sleep in your very own 'star bed' at the new **Jamtara Wilderness Camp**. Heaven.



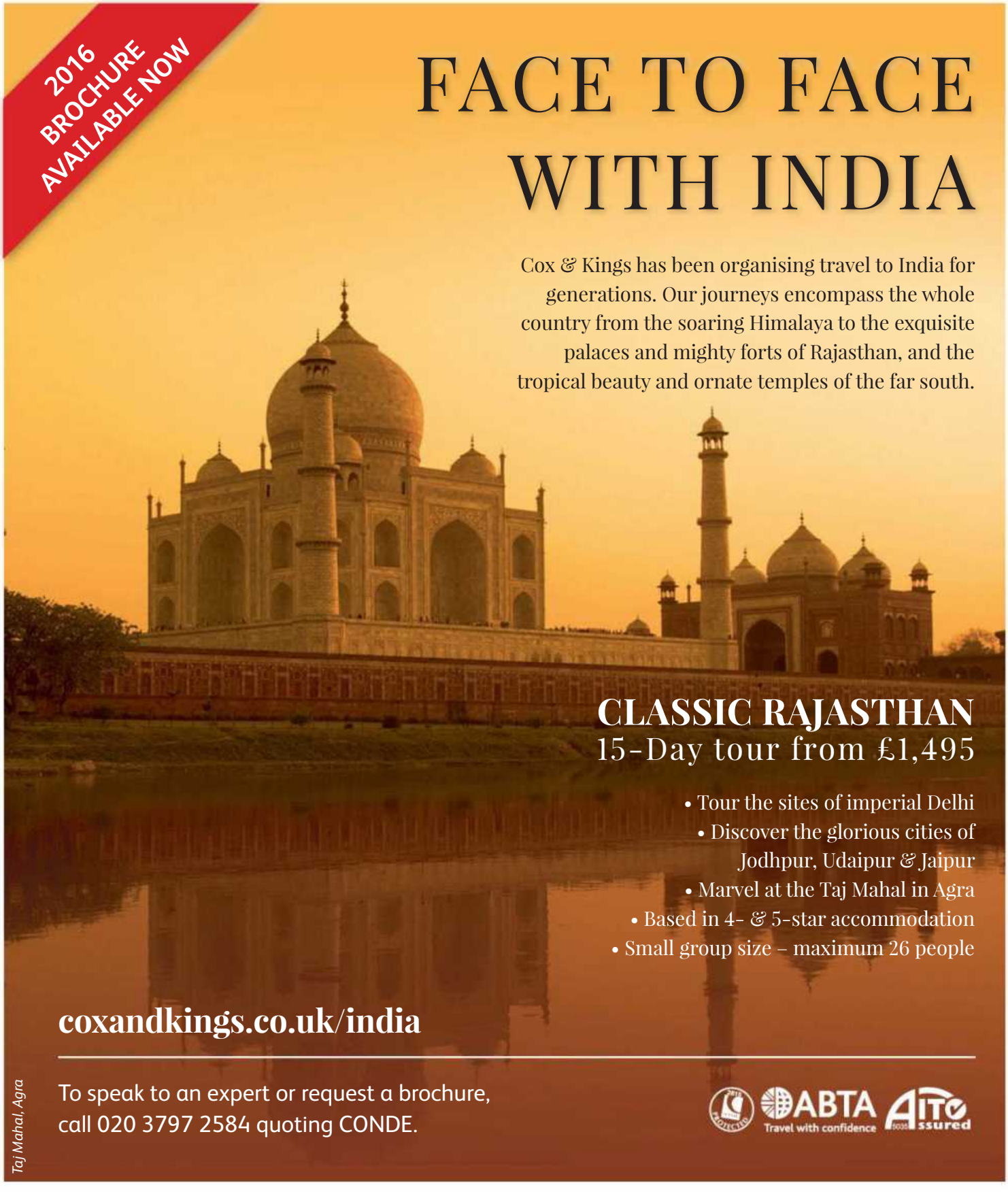
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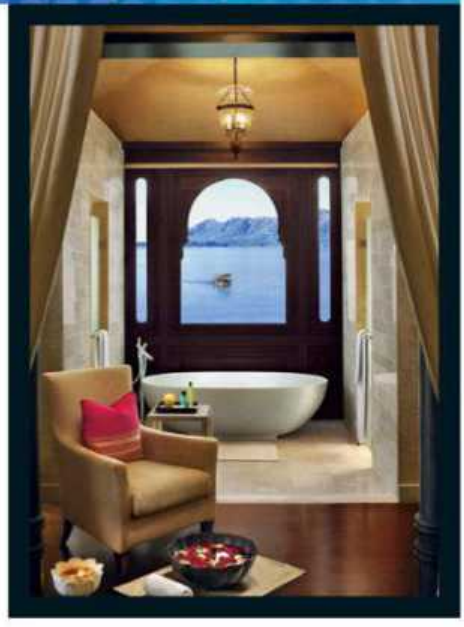
Taj Mahal, Agra

EMERALD





As the birthplace of yoga, Ayurveda and meditation, India offers a resort or spa to soothe all weary limbs and rebalance the most stressed-out individuals. High in the Himalayan foothills sits Rishikesh, India's yoga capital, inundated with ashrams, yoga centres and luxury spa sanctuaries. **Vana Estate**, on the outskirts of the city, is a beautiful wellness retreat that explores physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness through Ayurveda, Tibetan healing, yoga and a host of personalised treatments. The palatial award-winning **Ananda** spa is also lauded for its thorough approach to the ancient Indian traditions of Ayurveda.





High above sea level (at 8,825 feet) is the untouched paradise of Gulmarg in Kashmir. Here, amid pristine acres of wild meadows and coniferous forests, **The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa** (spa by L'Occitaine) provides majestic views of the Apharwat Peak. In the foothills of the Himalayas, the Oberoi Group's **Wildflower Hall**, offers the chance to refresh with forest walks, white-water rafting, or rejuvenate in the exclusive spa and al fresco pool. ITC Hotels' internationally-acclaimed Kaya Kalp The Royal Spa is situated in the **ITC Grand Bharat**. The 104 all-suite luxury retreat is just an hour outside of Delhi, surrounded by the Aravalli Hill Range.

In the lake city of Udaipur, **The Leela Palace Udaipur** has launched a selection of 'Spa and Spiritual Journeys' at the beautiful ESPA tented spa on the banks of Lake Pichola. The customised experiences offer three wellbeing programmes aimed at rejuvenating the mind, body and spirit. Jiva Grande at **Vivanta Bekal** focuses on long-term wellness programmes



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: APAS PROMENADE, ITC GRAND BHARAT; CUISINE AT VANA MALSI ESTATE; JIVA GRANDE AT VIVANTA BEKAL; THREE SIXTY ONE RESTAURANT, OBEROI GURGAON; AYURVEDIC MASSAGE, ANANDA SPA. **CENTRE**: SPA INTERIOR, LEELA PALACE

based on 2–4 weeks of yoga, Ayurveda and spiritual retreats. Nearby **Neeleshwar Hermitage** has one of the most accessible beaches in India, complete with a simple spa and a beautiful houseboat where you can while away the days drifting along the lazy backwaters. **CGH Earth** is another well-known Indian hotel brand with a strong environmental ethos. Based in the south, it offers some of the purest, most authentic Ayurveda and yoga experiences around. End your incredible journey at **The Oberoi, Gurgaon**, and enjoy the city's first 24-hour spa. It's the perfect pit-stop for jet lag recovery on arrival or pre-flight relaxation on departure.



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Tanjore Painting



Chettinadu House



DIPR/457/Display/2015

Tamil Nadu Tourism

Commissionerate of Tourism, Tamil Nadu Tourism Complex, No. 2, Wallajah Road, Chennai - 600 002. Tamil Nadu, India.
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Website: www.tamilnadutourism.org E-mail: ttdc@vsnl.com For online booking log on to : www.ttdconline.com
Ahmedabad : Ph : 079 - 2658 0317 Hyderabad : Ph : 040 - 2322 6858 New Delhi : Ph : 011 - 2374 5427 , 2336 6327
Mumbai : Ph : 022 - 2411 0118 Kolkata : Ph : 033 - 2423 7432 Jaipur : Ph : 0141 - 2204 999



TERRACOTTA

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: INDOOR POOL, OBEROI NEW DELHI; PRESIDENTIAL SUITE, OBEROI NEW DELHI; RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE, NEW DELHI; CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE RELIEF, TAMIL NADU; AJANTA CAVES, MAHARASHTRA



While the natural world of this magical land is indeed awe-inspiring, it is the man-made monuments that truly draw in the crowds – none more so than the ethereal Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh. Having basked in its vast shadow, explore the faded grandeur of the once mighty Mughal empire at the nearby ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri. Travel on through the riches of Rajasthan and the great monuments of the royal Rajputs, including the intricate Hawa Mahal and the Jantar Mantar observatory in Jaipur, plus the enduring hillforts of Mehrangarh, Chittorgarh, Amber, Ranthambore and Kumbhalgarh. However, only Jaisalmer Fort remains a living citadel, rising like a sandcastle out of the dusty dunes of the Thar Desert. Suján offers a glimpse of boutique-luxury both at **The Serai, Jaisalmer** and at the recently renovated **Suján Rajmahal Palace** – a riot of regal colour. Meanwhile **Taj Group** has an entire palace portfolio – now that really does offer the chance to live like a king.



Travel east to the mighty Ghats in Varanasi that skirt along the holy River Ganges and form part of the oldest living city in India. You will also find revered Buddhist temples and sites nearby. Stop en route and witness the eye-opening, exotic, 10th-century temples of Khajuraho, created by the Chandella kings (who were heavily influenced by the Tantric school of thought). Discover the remnants of the Raj with the Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata and stay at the elegant **Oberoi Grand, Kolkata**.

Moving to central and east India, the rock-cut caves and shrines of Ajanta and Ellora are



the pride of Maharashtra dating from 200BC – 700AD. In Mumbai, see the imposing Gateway of India, or the impressive Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) a beating artery of this pulsating city. Head south and be inspired by the almost prehistoric, boulder-like landscape that is home to the ghost city of Hampi in Karnataka. Among the many UNESCO world heritage sites stand the psychedelic



temples of Tamil Nadu, built by the Chola empire during the 11th and 12th centuries. Head back north to New Delhi, home to myriad architectural styles including Edwin Lutyens' cool, ordered 1920's design, juxtaposed with ancient monuments such as the magnificent Humayun's Tomb – which can be seen when staying at **The Oberoi, New Delhi**. Tailor your historic tour with the specialists at **greavesindia.com** who have been creating bespoke tours for over 30 years.





chic

BOUTIQUE

For boutique boltholes in India, The Park Hotels get it spot on





Boutique is not a word often associated with India, but The Park Hotels are bringing a different kind of luxury to the country: one that is intimate, design-led and eco-friendly. The growing collection has put its roots down in a number of major cities and each hotel is hot property. We check out what's on the books...

Flagship property The Park Hyderabad is a breathtaking creation by world-renowned Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The stunning metal façade has been perfectly chiselled to form an architectural work of art. Inside is just as impressive with designer rooms kitted out with cutting-edge technology, all achieved with a LEED Gold certificate in hand for good eco credentials. Standout features include the open-air pool, Hyderabadi dishes at Aish and cocktail quaffing at super-cool Carbon. Following in similar footsteps is urban retreat The Park Bangalore, as cool as it is contemporary. We love the intimate spa, Aura, and Italia has been voted one of India's best Italian restaurants. The brand has also bedded down in the capital. The Park New Delhi was designed by Conran and Partners and is inspired by elemental nature. The décor is gorgeously eclectic creating a one-off ambience. Eat poolside at award-winning Aqua, party in Agni, fuse authentic Indian food with contemporary elegance at Fire or retreat to spa heaven at Aura.

Stylish since its inception over five decades ago, and today revamped and restyled, The Park Kolkata remains one of the hottest places around town. This uber-cool retreat offers lavish rooms, live music, oriental dining, and a glamorous al fresco bar – not to mention the luxury yacht. Anyone Mumbai-bound should check into The Park Navi Mumbai. Tucked away amid lush green foliage, this wonderful refuge is an hour from downtown Mumbai but feels even further away. The 80 rooms mix traditional Indian patterns with modern twists, while West 1 serves an elaborate selection of Indian and international favourites. For location The Park Visakhapatnam wins hands down. Overlooking the Bay of Bengal, this enchanting getaway sprawls along six acres of private beachfront. One of the best urban beach resorts we've come across in India, the design is inspired by local craft while the region's Buddhist influence infuses a chilled vibe. Feast on spice-laced delicacies at candlelit Bamboo Bay or enjoy sunsets and a sumptuous menu at Vista.

Chennai is home to two hotels, The Park Chennai and The Park Pod, the latter consisting of just 20 ultra-stylish rooms. The Park Pod featured on our Hot List 2009 and has continued to make its name as a cutting-edge modern sanctuary. Not to be missed is its bar, Absolute, complete with pool and resident DJ. Its older sister The Park Chennai, can be found on the historic premises of Gemini Studios (a legendary film production centre). Designed by Hirsch Bedner Associates, the mood is calm contemporary, featuring walls adorned with original film posters. Not to be missed is the exquisite Thai food at Lotus, 24-hour Indian at Six-O-One and partying at Pasha. And last, but definitely not least, is The Park Calangute Goa – its 30 stylish white rooms are the go-to for those in the know. What's more it's slap-bang on the junction of two of Goa's most popular beaches. The Park has upcoming hotels in two unique and intimate locations, Corbett National Park (Uttarakhand) and Wayanad (Kerala). Need we say more?

For further information visit theparkhotels.com or call 1800 102 PARK (7275)

Clockwise from top left: The outdoor pool at The Park Calangute Goa; Roxy cocktail bar at The Park Kolkata; Aqua poolside bar at The Park Chennai; Aqua at The Park Bangalore; The façade at The Park Hyderabad. Centre: bar at The Calangute Goa






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Clockwise from top: ITC Grand Bharat at dusk, Gurgaon; Kaya Kalp The Royal Spa, ITC Mughal, Agra; Pool terrace at ITC Rajputana, Jaipur

RESPONSIBLE LUXURY *in* INDIA



ITC Hotels, part of Starwood's The Luxury Collection ®, offers 11 exceptional properties all inspired by the rich culture of their regions

Every aspect of these hotels is illustrative of ITC Hotels' commitment to providing planet positive luxury experiences to the global traveller. With the largest number of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certified hotels, ITC Hotels is recognised as the 'greenest luxury hotel chain in the world'. The premium quality group offers experiential itineraries for your next trip to India, providing an exceptional taste of hospitality with opulent residences, renowned signature cuisine, and award-winning wellness experiences, using contemporary business practices that harness the elements of nature.

THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Begin your journey at the capital city of New Delhi, amid intoxicating sights, sounds and smells, before retreating to the ITC Maurya. A favourite among world leaders, its sophisticated Buddhist stupa design pays tribute to the great Mauryan dynasty.



The hotel also houses two of the city's most sought-after restaurants: Bukhara and Dum Pukht. Next stop is Agra, home to the Taj Mahal, where you will receive a royal welcome at the ITC Mughal. Winner of the prestigious Aga Khan award for Architectural Excellence in Asia, the hotel is archetypal of the grand ethos of the Mughal era. On to Jaipur, the 'Pink City' of India with the ITC Rajputana, which is designed to echo the region's traditional havelis with refined artistry that sublimely reflects the spirit of Rajasthan and its royalty. Complete your journey of the Golden Triangle at the ITC Grand Bharat in Gurgaon – ITC Hotels' newest offering and India's first all-suite luxury retreat. Nestled in an idyllic setting, guests will find luxurious living, elaborate culinary experiences, a royal spa, bespoke banqueting and a 27-hole signature Jack Nicklaus golf course.

SOUTHERN SPLENDOUR

Start your journey in Chennai with the ITC Grand Chola, where the palatial design – inspired by the splendour of a glorious southern dynasty – creates an ideal retreat. Travel on to Bengaluru (Bangalore), the garden city of India, which beckons with its old-world charm. Stay at either the ITC Gardenia, inspired by the magnificent gardens of the city, or the aristocratic ITC Windsor, which evokes the days of the Raj. End your journey of southern India at Hyderabad and reflect upon the history of the Nizams (the incredibly wealthy historic state rulers), while experiencing the culture of the Kakatiya Dynasty with a stay at ITC Kakatiya.

WESTERN GRANDEUR AND EASTERN SOLACE

Commence your journey in western India at the cosmopolitan hub of Mumbai as you experience the region's vintage charm with the ITC Maratha, which provides a reflection of the rich culture of the Maratha dynasty. Alternately, experience the city's British colonial style, eloquently reflected in the architecture of the ITC Grand Central. Look east to Kolkata, and experience the heritage of Bengal with the ITC Sonar, India's first business resort, which captures the essence of the city through its greenery and water bodies, reminiscent of the garden houses of yesteryear.

For reservations and further information, visit itchotels.in/luxurysojourns

Reader offer

*Book a 6-night Golden Triangle itinerary (valid from October 2015 to March 2016) staying at: ITC Maurya (2 nights), ITC Mughal (1 night), ITC Rajputana (2 nights), ITC Grand Bharat/ITC Maurya (1 night). Rate per night: *Suite $423 **Premium room $220*

*Indicative rates subject to currency fluctuation

COLOURS OF India

TRAVELLER PROMOTION

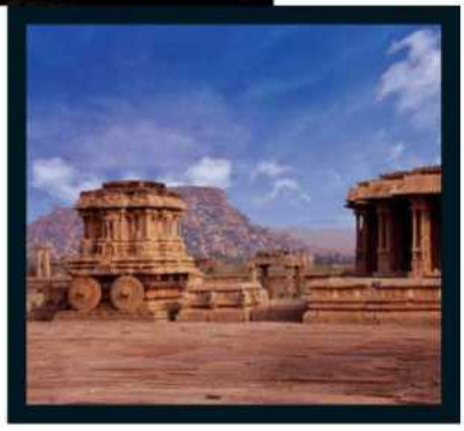




CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BEDROOM SUITE, AHILYA FORT; GUJARAT WILDLIFE; EXTERIOR, SUJAN RAJAMAHAL PALACE, JAIPUR; BEDROOM SUITE, SUJAN RAJAMAHAL PALACE, JAIPUR. **CENTRE**: STONE CHARIOT AT HAMPI, KARNATAKA



Seek adventure and head for the less visited states of Odisha, Gujarat or the remote, Robinson Crusoe-esque Andaman islands. Even in Rajasthan you can still shy away from the more touristy haunts and head for the unsung splendours of Bikaner or Bundi, staying in delightful palaces and forgotten forts along the way, such as the beautiful, ramshackle **Bhainsrorgarh Fort Hotel** and **Ramathra Fort**. The neighbouring states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are also ripe for adventure. Gujarat is home to the stark, treeless marshes and arid planes of Kutch, the 11th-century sun temple at Modhera and





over 900 intricately carved marble temples that topple down the holy hill of Shatrunjaya. In Madhya Pradesh you can go beyond the wild jungles and discover the awe-inspiring city of Mandu, staying at the nearby Ahilya Fort which is perched majestically above the Narmada River.

The Konkan Coast of Maharashtra stretches from Mumbai to Goa and has some beautiful remote beaches to explore such as the quiet fishing hamlet of Murud or the sedate village of Ganpatipule. Embrace the positive vibes emanating from Andhra Pradesh – home to one of the most-visited pilgrimage sites – Venkateswara Temple at Tirupati. Or, discover the 'Agra of the South', Bijapur in Karnataka with its superb Islamic architecture. Aside from the much-visited Jagannath Temple in Puri and the cultural pull of Konarak and Bhubaneswar, Odisha is home to some of the oldest tribal heritage. The colourful village of Pipli is well worth a visit alone, for unique appliquè parasols, fabric and clothing.

High up in the distant reaches of the north east lie arguably some of the most beautiful parts of India. Hike through alpine meadows filled with rhododendrons on the Dzongri trek in Sikkim (close to the imposing Kanchenjunga mountain). Arunachal Pradesh is home to the Tawang monastery – the largest in India. Travel onboard the Assam Bengal Navigation cruise and discover the delights of the Brahmaputra River as it snakes through the patchwork tea plantations of Assam framed by the hazy blue mountains. In the Andaman Islands, opt for the warm welcome and laid-back vibe of tiny Neil Island – neighbour to the more touristy Havelock. Wherever you travel, there is no doubt that the colours of India will burn bright in your memory, leaving you wondering if your life thus far has been lived in black and white.



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LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Getting there
The two international airlines in India are **Air India** *(airindia.com)* and **Jet Airways** *(jetairways.com)*. Both offer excellent international connections from the UK and have extensive domestic connectivity. Air India has recently increased its domestic baggage allowance to 25kg (for a limited period) – extremely helpful for all the last minute shopping. **British Airways** and **Virgin Atlantic** also offer direct, non-stop flights to India.

India specialist operators
• **Abercrombie & Kent**
abercrombiekent.co.uk
• **Ampersand Travel**
ampersandtravel.com
• **Cox & Kings**
coxandkings.co.uk
• **Greaves India**
greavesindia.com
• **Transindus**
transindus.co.uk

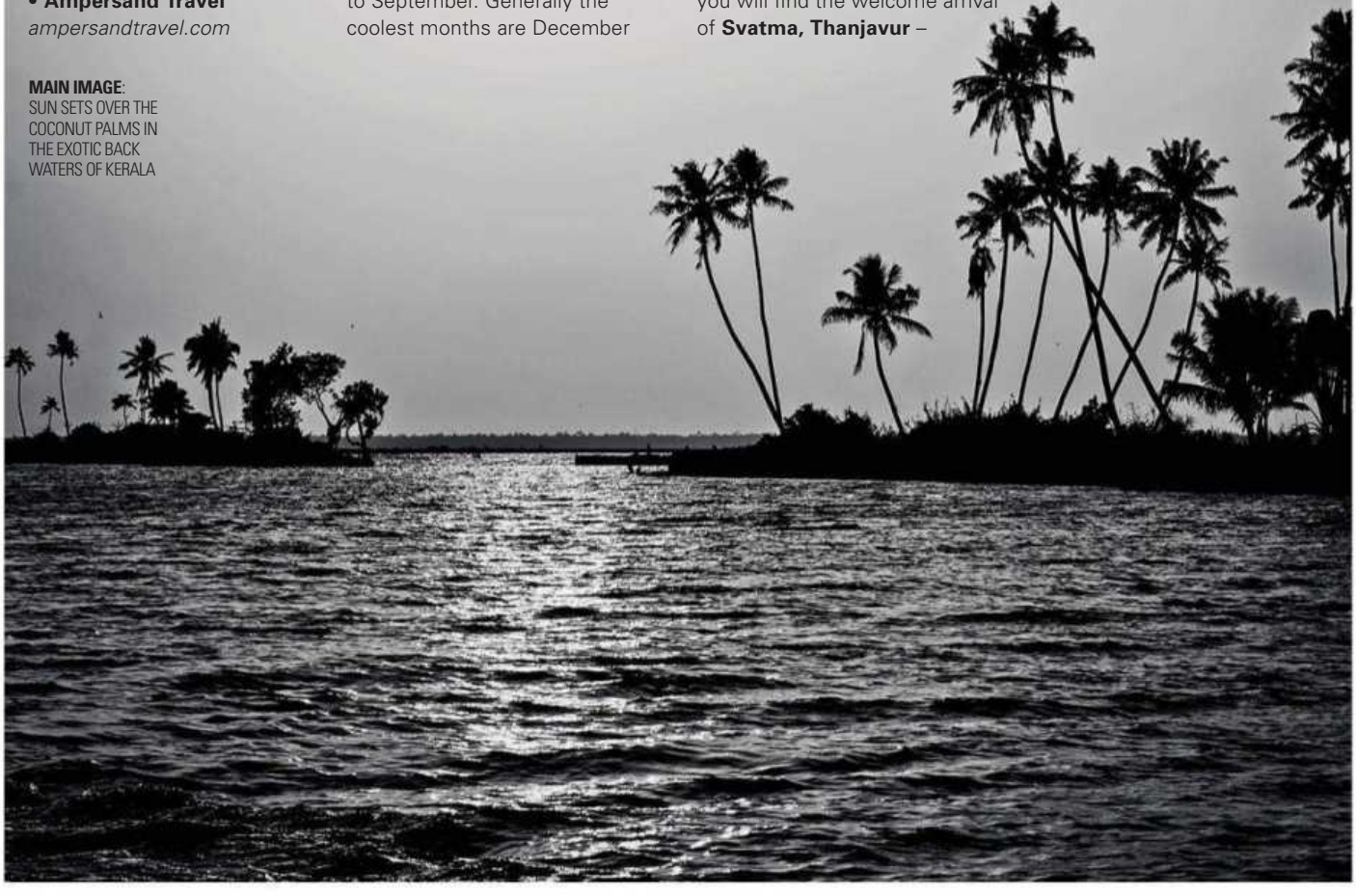
Visas
Visas are required for travel to India. UK passport holders are now eligible for e-tourist visas on arrival. An e-visa can be obtained at *indianvisaonline.gov.in*

When to go
India has a diverse weather pattern that allows for travel throughout the year – with the help of some careful planning. The **monsoon** usually arrives in **late May** and carries on through to September. Generally the coolest months are December through to February, with temperatures climbing in April and May, the wettest months being July and August. **October – March** is usually considered the best time to travel.

Latest openings
The first **St Regis** has now opened in the financial heart of Mumbai. Enjoying an excellent midtown location, you can easily access the historic heart of south Mumbai as well as reaching the fashionable suburbs of Bandra and Juhu.

Ahilya by the Sea is the latest opening in Goa and promises an idyllic villa experience with panoramic sea views from every room. Further south in Tamil Nadu you will find the welcome arrival of **Svatma, Thanjavur** – a beautiful converted manor house. Taj Group sees a wave of new openings this season starting with **Taj Santacruz Mumbai**, **Vivanta by Taj Guwahati and The Gateway Hotel, Corbett National Park**. tajhotels.com

The tourist mecca of Rajasthan continues to entice travellers with its wonderful array of boutique forts and heritage-inspired homestays. Recent openings include **Dev Shree** – an eight-bedroom haveli by the creators of Deogarh, and, west of Lake Pichola, the sophisticated **Bujera Fort**.



MAIN IMAGE:
SUN SETS OVER THE COCONUT PALMS IN THE EXOTIC BACK WATERS OF KERALA



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Lizzie Heeley and James Bell



Sarah Cairns, *Condé Nast Traveller* editor Melinda Stevens and Gerrie Pitt



Rossella and Huw Beaugié



Leah Marshall and Didier Le Calvez

LET'S CELEBRATE

This year's party brought the best of the travel world to the Dive Bar in London's Ham Yard Hotel, one of the hottest places to stay in the capital. Voted for by the *Condé Nast Traveller* readers, the winners included Italy as the most popular country for the second year running and Paris, the top overseas city. Thanks to Waterford Crystal for the Number One in the World award – won by La Mamounia in Marrakech – Caorunn Gin, Bottlegreen, Louis Roederer, Propercorn and REN. To see the full list of winners, visit www.cntraveller.com/readers-travel-awards-2015



Firmdale Hotels' Kit Kemp, *centre*, and her daughters Willow, *left*, and Araminta, *right*



Condé Nast Traveller features editor Fiona Kerr and Jacqueline McDevitt



Chris Gottlieb and Ian Simkins



Chris Cowdray and Duncan Palmer



Corinna Yap and Paul Charles



Condé Nast Traveller publisher Simon Leadsford and Chris Orlikowski



Amanda Hyndman and George Morgan-Grenville



Keith Williams



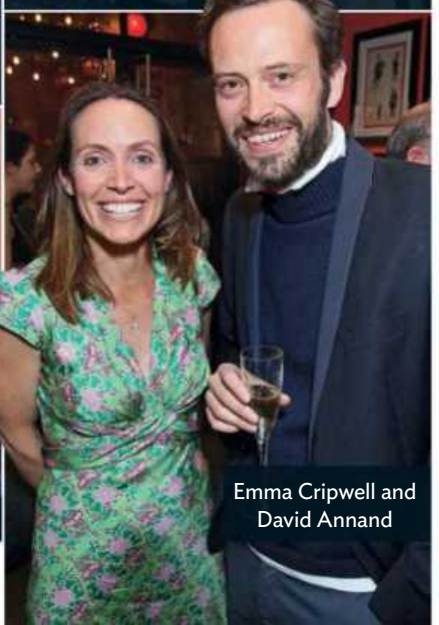
Lalita James and Tanya Dalton



Jo Vickers and Nicholas Coleridge



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PHOTOGRAPHS: DARREN GERRISH

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£30, thisworks.com



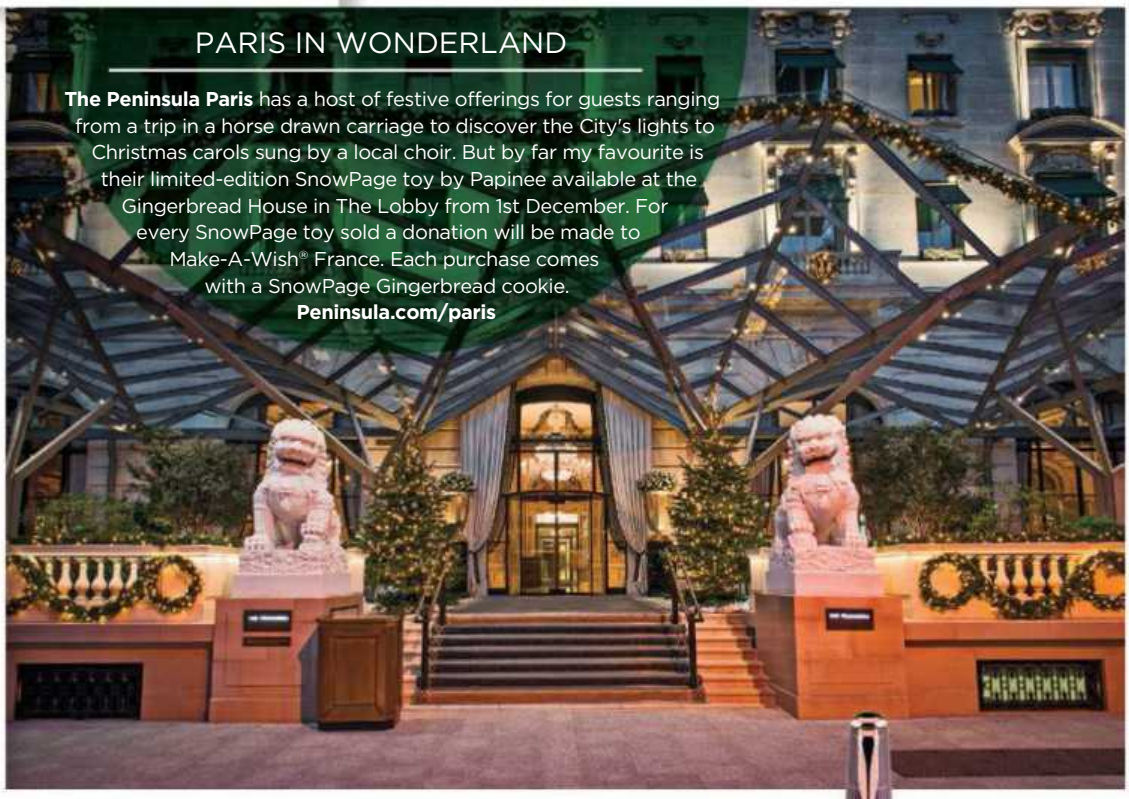
IT'S A WRAP

This cable cashmere travel set by Ralph Lauren Home is the perfect gift for Christmas and irresistible for even the most seasoned of travellers. £395, ralphlaurenhome.com

PARIS IN WONDERLAND

The Peninsula Paris has a host of festive offerings for guests ranging from a trip in a horse drawn carriage to discover the City's lights to Christmas carols sung by a local choir. But by far my favourite is their limited-edition SnowPage toy by Papinee available at the Gingerbread House in The Lobby from 1st December. For every SnowPage toy sold a donation will be made to Make-A-Wish® France. Each purchase comes with a SnowPage Gingerbread cookie.

Peninsula.com/paris



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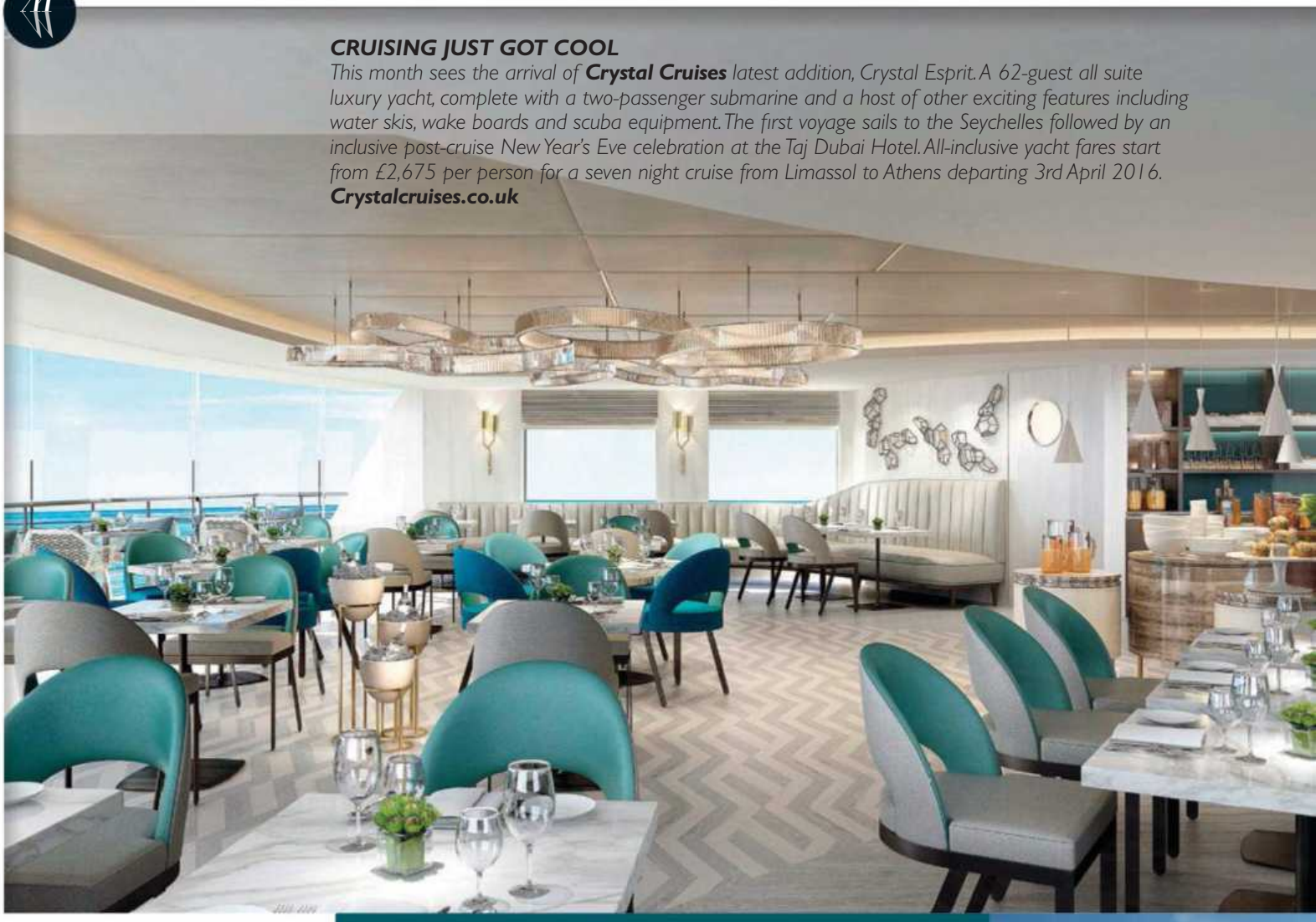


Travel in style with this fragrance collection from Cochine containing six 8ml atomisers – all are perfect for your handbag and will keep you smelling delightful however long your journey.

£39, cochine.com

CRUISING JUST GOT COOL

This month sees the arrival of ***Crystal Cruises*** *latest addition, Crystal Esprit. A 62-guest all suite luxury yacht, complete with a two-passenger submarine and a host of other exciting features including water skis, wake boards and scuba equipment. The first voyage sails to the Seychelles followed by an inclusive post-cruise New Year's Eve celebration at the Taj Dubai Hotel. All-inclusive yacht fares start from £2,675 per person for a seven night cruise from Limassol to Athens departing 3rd April 2016.* ***Crystalcruises.co.uk***



This month **The Carlyle**, *one of New York's most iconic and historic hotels, celebrates its 85th birthday. There are a variety of offers to allow guests to participate in the merriment ranging from anniversary champagne cocktails in Bemelmans Bar to a stay in the Empire Suite. Whatever your choice, you're guaranteed to join U.S. Presidents Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter and Reagan who referred to The Carlyle as their "unofficial" New York home.* **Rosewoodhotels.com**



ONE TO WATCH

The Portugieser Hand-Wound Edition 'BFI London Film Festival 2015' in stainless steel celebrates **IWC**'s second year of partnership with the BFI and BFI London Film Festival and is available from the IWC Boutique on New Bond Street or The Watch Gallery – their exclusive wholesale partner for the launch.

£8,250, thewatchgallery.com



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UP3™ by ***Jawbone®*** *has everything you need to set a training goal and stick to it. A multi-sensor platform monitors your overall fitness whilst Advanced Sleep captures your snooze stages in detail. Advanced Activity automatically identifies workouts, Smart Coach connects with the UP App to track your progress and the compact design is slim and stylish too.*

£129.99, jawbone.com



BEAUTY SAVIOUR
Pamper your hands in the winter months with Molton Brown's luxurious Alba White Truffle Hand Regime. Begin with a gentle hand exfoliator (enriched with a gourmand fragrance of nutmeg, oilbanum and vanilla) before massaging in the ultra-rich hand treatment. **£14, moltonbrown.co.uk**





WHEN TRAVEL MEETS LUXE: **ST. REGIS HOTELS & RESORTS** HAS PARTNERED WITH LUXURY FASHION BRAND, MARCHESA, TO CREATE FOUR EXCLUSIVE AND ONE-OF-A-KIND COUTURE BRIDAL GOWNS INSPIRED BY A FEW OF THEIR MOST ICONIC URBAN AND RESORT DESTINATIONS: MUMBAI, DUBAI, PUNTA MITA AND NEW YORK. THIS GOWN WAS INSPIRED BY THE NEW YORK SKYLINE WITH A NOD TO THE 1950'S. **STREGIS.COM/MARCHESA**



HOT HOTEL
The Park Hyatt Istanbul-Maçka Palas was built in 1922 and beautifully fuses Art Deco with the city's own style. It also has the most spacious guestrooms in town - each one has an oversized wet room made from fossilised limestone with five different bathing experiences. Recover from your escapades in serious style. ***Hyatt.com***



Celebrating the 100th birthday of Frank Sinatra, Jack Daniels has created the Sinatra Century, a 100 proof Tennessee Whiskey matured in grooved oak barrels to create a bold flavour with hints of butterscotch, cinnamon and brown sugar. The bottle is accompanied by a lacquered carry-case based on one of the grand pianos that Frank played upon. **£450, jackdaniels.com**



CITY COOL
Travelling to Tokyo? Make sure to visit the refreshed Rooftop Bar at ***Andaz Tokyo****. As the highest open-air rooftop protected bar terrace in Tokyo, it has incredible views and an eight seat sushi counter 'the SUSHI' where master sushi chefs carefully prepare some of the finest dishes you'll ever eat.* ***Andaztokyo.com***

67 PALL MALL, A NEW MEMBERS CLUB FOUNDED BY WINE LOVERS, (FOR WINE LOVERS), HAS LAUNCHED IN SIR EDWIN LUTYEN'S FORMER BANKING HALL IN LONDON WITH A VIEW TO MAKING FINE WINES ACCESSIBLE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND FINANCIALLY TO ITS MEMBERS. AMEN TO THAT. ***67pallmall.co.uk***



THE QUEBEC FROM **MILLI MILLU** PERFECTLY ENCAPSULATES THIS SEASON'S SHEARLING TREND. WE ADORE ITS BONBON STYLE AND THE FACT IT CAN BE WORN AS A CLUTCH OR ACROSS THE BODY. VERSATILITY IS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY WHEN TRAVELLING! ***£235, millimillu.com***



Release the essence of Christmas with this stylish Laurent-Perrier Cuvée Rosé birdcage complete with an elegant birdcage bottle stopper guaranteed to be the centerpiece of any bash. **£70, johnlewis.com**



Now that the nights are drawing in, treat yourself to some super-comfortable nightwear. Derek Rose's new nightshirt is cut to flatter your silhouette whilst also being made from the softest fabrics, making hibernation more appealing than ever. ***From £89, derek-rose.com***



The Bruton Collection is William & Son's first in-house designed handbag collection and has become an instant classic. This large day bag in pomegranate calfskin is the perfect shade for the season, whilst its large leather zipped pocket is ideal for storing all those essential travel items. ***£1,440, williamandson.com***



Keep warm (and stylish) on flights with the beautiful range of cashmere blend scarves from Nazanin Rose. Her designs merge exquisite hand-painted prints and expressive use of colour - the results are truly hypnotic. ***£195, nazaninrosematin.com***

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC



In search of something special? **Hôtel Plaza Athénée's** seasonal ice-rink returns to its courtyard on 1st December with instructors and delights from the head pastry chef at the ready. You can read all about the history of the hotel in their new book (in partnership with Assouline): 'Hôtel Plaza Athénee: the couture address in Paris', available at **assouline.com, £55**

HEAD TO BEACH

Fancy some winter sun? Thai Airways has resumed its double daily London to Bangkok flights making it even easier to escape winter. ***Thaiairways.com***



In the market for a watch? **Watchfinder**, a pre-owned web-based company, has a new dedicated service centre providing certified servicing; each of their watches is thoroughly checked to ensure it is genuine. Once you've received your watch you have fourteen days to decide if you want to keep it - if not you'll receive a full refund. Rolex Date (one year old) **£4,150, watchfinder.co.uk**



Vaishaly Patel has launched a new, exclusive treatment (The Vaishaly Experience) at the Four Seasons Resort in Mauritius and the Seychelles (which is lucky, because her London clinic has a six month waiting list!). The treatment begins by soothing guests into a state of deep relaxation, before the use of non-intrusive cranial sacral techniques. This increases blood flow to the brain, relieving stress and creating an overall feeling of wellbeing. **Vaishaly.com**

ALL ABOARD

On the larger scale of cruising, **Holland America Line**'s Ms Koningsdam launches in April 2016 with 1,331 guest accommodations and a contemporary, light interior design. Expect multiple fine dining restaurants, the opportunity for you to blend your own wine (yes, really!), brilliant children's activities and a super luxurious spa. Sheer bliss. **Koningsdam.hollandamerica.com**

Condé Nast Traveller
Dream Destinations EUROPE-UK



TITCHWELL MANOR.A stone's throw from the North Norfolk coast, boutique hotel Titchwell Manor is a stunning country retreat, combining traditional values with chic accommodation. Boasting 3 Rosettes, dine in one of the hotel's two restaurants; The Conservatory and Eating Rooms. For more information please visit www.titchwellmanor.com or call 01485 210 221



SILVERHOLME is a beautiful Georgian Manor House in the Lake District. Set on the 5,000 acre Graythwaite Estate, with sweeping gardens down to Lake Windemere Silverholme provides an air of relaxed luxury with a stylish blend of period character and modern design. The house sleeps 18. For more information visit www.graythwaite.com or email silverholme@graythwaite.com



COQUET COTTAGES Find the perfect short break in Northumberland with Coquet Cottages. From a romantic luxury bolt-hole to a large country cottage for a memorable get-together with friends and family, browse our website or call us - we have the perfect cottage for you...
T: 01665 710700
E: info@coquetcottages.co.uk
W: www.coquetcottages.co.uk



SCARISTA HOUSE, winner of the 2015 Good Hotel Guide Editors' Choice Award, is an elegant small hotel overlooking one of the most beautiful beaches on the remote Hebridean Isle of Harris. Guests enjoy traditional comfort in elegantly furnished rooms and natural, skilled cooking and good wines in the intimate restaurant. Visit www.scaristahouse.com or call 01859 550238.



LA SABLONNERIE HOTEL. A convivial corner of a beautiful island. Gorgeous gardens, peace and tranquillity, birds, butterflies, flowers, horses and carriages – no cars – how could one not enjoy this amazing paradise? You will find this hotel to have a great 'joie de vivre' as well as terrific food. La Sablonnerie has recently received the highly coveted award from Condé Nast Johansens - 'Small Hotel of the Year'. Visit www.sablonneriesark.com or call 01481 832 061.



GLEWSTONE COURT
Glewstone Court is a hidden gem set in an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. The Two Rosette Georgian restaurant serves locally sourced, high quality food and wines. A perfect venue for your family getaway, special celebrations or exclusive weekend events. Contact Gary and Amy on: Tel 01989 770367 info@glewstonecourt.com



CLASSIC COTTAGES find holiday cottages that people fall in love with. When you walk into one of their holiday homes, they want you to say 'Wow', put your feet up and relax. Their years of experience will ensure you will have the best holiday ever. For further details please visit www.classic.co.uk
or call 01326 555555





LLANGOED HALL is a beautiful country house hotel nestled into the Wye River Valley. Enjoy this tranquil setting within Laura Ashley inspired interiors and treat yourself to an award-winning culinary experience! Llangoed Hall is the ideal venue – whether it be for a special occasion such as a wedding, or even just for a weekend escape into serenity.
01874 754525
www.llangoedhall.com
enquiries@llangoedhall.com



The Sunday Times Country House Hotel Of the Year 2014-2015
Three AA Rosettes for Culinary Excellence 2014-2015
The AA Four Red Star Property
The AA Notable Wine List



BRIMSTONE HOTEL is the epitome of luxury, nestled in the very heart of the Lake District. To stay in any of the 16 rooms or suites is to escape into relaxation, enhanced by the attentive service of the host team. The beautiful scenery is enough of an incentive to visit; the food, rooms and spa are reasons to stay.
015394 38062 –
www.brimstonehotel.co.uk



THE ROYAL PAVILION TOWNHOUSE HOTEL, metres away from Brighton's world famous promenade and beach, provides the perfect base from which to explore one of England's most vibrant cities. The early 19th-century building is situated in a beautiful Regency square, and the luxurious interiors make this a hotel well worth a visit. For more information, call: 01273747685 or www.rpthotel.co.uk

Condé Nast Traveller
Dream Destinations EUROPE



HOTEL FINCA FUENTE TECHADA is an exquisite small hotel an hour from Madrid, Spain. The house has an internal patio bursting with greenery, with six comfortable rooms. Boasting views of the foothills of Sierra, beautiful beams from monasteries and old woods give a wonderfully warm feel to the hotel.
Visit www.hotelfincafuentetechada.com or call +34 921 062 040



HERITAGE LISBON HOTELS
Live the Portuguese Charm and Tradition in the Historic centre of Lisbon. Stay in one of the 5 Heritage Lisbon Hotels Collection – As Janelas Verdes, Heritage Avenida Liberdade Hotel, Hotel Britania, Hotel Lisboa Plaza and Solar Do Castelo.
Tel: +351 213 218 200
heritage.hotels@heritage.pt
www.heritage.pt



Come to the **GRAN HOTEL ATLANTIS BAHÍA REAL**, located in one of the most attractive areas of Fuerteventura, right on the seafront near the stunning beauty of Corralejo Natural Dune Park. This is a hotel designed for the ultimate in relaxation, privacy and luxurious pampering, where personal touch and attention to detail are guaranteed. Tel: +34 928 53 71 53, E-mail: reservations.bahiareal@atlantishotels.com
Web: www.atlantisbahiareal.com



In the heart of Rome, **VILLA SPALLETTI TRIVELLI** is unique among the historic residences. A discreet and intimate luxury villa hotel, it has elegant and refined drawing rooms furnished with genuine antiques, an exclusive wellness centre and sumptuous rooms characterized by a balance of classicism and contemporary lifestyle conveniences.Visit www.villaspalletti.it or call 0039 06 48907934



NO. 46 is a unique apartment located in one of the most beautiful districts of Prague. From the moment you arrive at No. 46 in the private car that will be ordered for you, you will be enveloped in a sea of serenity; it is a haven of comfort, peace, and creative inspiration to be enjoyed and remembered.
T: + 353 862631485
www.no46prague.com



LA BORDE is an elegant but intimate retreat in Burgundy's rolling landscape, only 90 minutes from Paris. The personalised service you receive makes the 16th century former chateau your home for the duration of your stay. The cuisine, exquisite gardens, and timeless beauty of the manor itself are only a few reasons why La Borde is a must for anyone seeking a tranquil escape. +33 (0)386476901 www.lbmh.fr



RESIDENZA TORRE COLONNA is a beautiful guest house nestled in a defensive tower built in 1247, found in the bustling heart of Rome. Thanks to its unique blend of modern luxury and medieval history, combining boutique rooms and excellent service, the property is itself a priceless piece of the Roman story and is well worth a visit.
T: +3906 83600192 www.torrecolonna.it



PALM GALLERY HOTEL: ROME is a boutique Hotel in a restored historic villa in a charming central neighbourhood. There is a highly personalised service, 10 bright rooms, a lush garden and terrace, as well as complimentary L'Occitane products. info@palmgalleryhotel.com
7% Discount: promocode TRAVEL when booking at www.palmgalleryhotel.com
+390664781858



ROMANTIC VILLA ORSELINA***
Located in a privileged position above Locarno with breathtaking views over Lake Maggiore, the hotel offers unique suites & rooms with a view, a fine restaurant with fantastic terrace and a wellness oasis. Peace, discretion & Mediterranean flair. Villa Orselina, the world of relaxation.
www.villaorselina.ch
E. welcome@villaorselina.ch
T. +41 91 735 73 73.





COURTYARD is an intimate, exclusive hotel in Kalkan, Turkey. It is just a stroll away from the beautiful pebbly town beach and a wonderful range of restaurants, bars and shops. The buildings have been beautifully restored to provide six unique bedrooms, each with their own personality and style.
Visit www.courtyardkalkan.com or call +90 242 844 3738.



LA ALMUNIA DEL VALLE
is a charming boutique hotel set in stunning countryside, just 5 miles from the beautiful city of Granada, Andalusia. Book online at www.laalmuniadelvalle.com or email info@laalmuniadelvalle.com

Condé Nast Traveller
Dream Destinations ASIA



RESORT RIO
Goa is synonymous with fun and relaxation and there is no better time to visit this enchanting city than the month of December. Make your winter break memorable with Resort Rio, the No.1 Five Star Deluxe Resort in North Goa. Nestled on the banks of the Baga river with the famous salt pans of Goa beyond, Resort Rio is conveniently located, close to Goa's renowned night markets, beaches and restaurants. What's more, this 10 acres of riverside paradise with its inimitable offerings is a destination in itself. So, whether you wish to revel in the festive celebrations with all the trimmings, savor the sea and sun, party the night away or sit back, relax and have a good time, Resort Rio promises to give you memories that you will cherish for a lifetime. Luxurious rooms, villas some with plunge pools, specialized restaurants, award winning Zaara Spa, fun filled activities, themed nights, classic architecture and the famous "Rio Culture" makes this charming resort a travellers' paradise. Visit www.ResortRio.com or call +91 832 2267302 / +91 9922708780 for more information.

Condé Nast Traveller
Dream Destinations AFRICA & INDIAN OCEAN



THE ZANZIBAR COLLECTION
Exotic, Luxurious, Zanzibar!
The Zanzibar Collection is a privately owned collection of beautiful boutique hotels inspired by the magic of Zanzibar, lying on one of the Top 30 Island beaches in the world. Offering a range of water sports, stunning spas and East Africa's only National Geographic affiliated PADI 5 star Dive Centre. Baraza Resort and Spa was chosen as one of the World's 60 Best New Hotels on the Conde Nast Hotlist and among the top 10 resorts in Africa and the Middle East!
www.thezanzibarcollection.com



THE PLANTATION LODGE TANZANIA, AFRICA
Like a green oasis, Plantation Lodge rests on the red-brown hills. The individually furnished rooms and suites melting harmoniously into the flowering garden offer comfort and relaxation. Plantation Lodge's cordial service leaves no wish unfulfilled. For more information visit www.plantation-lodge.com



The wooden southern slopes of Table Mountain,in an area of outstanding natural beauty lies **THE TARRAGON.** Stylish,serviced cottages (2-6 pax) are set in gardens with magnificent mountain and valley views offering peace and tranquility but ideally located for all that Cape Town has to offer.
www.thetarragon.com 0027(0)76191 7755
info@thetarragon.com

Condé Nast Traveller
Dream Destinations AUSTRALASIA & OCEANIA



THE HUKA RETREATS
www.hukaretreats.com
Three sister properties in South Africa, Fiji and New Zealand – chic and understated statements of exclusivity and seclusion, all offering an exceptional hospitality experience to the world's most discerning travellers.



GRANDE PROVENCE ESTATE, South Africa, is located within a one-hour drive from Cape Town. This 300-year old heritage estate offers award-winning wines, cuisine and art gallery with superb accommodation at The Owner's Cottage and La Provençale.
T +27 (0)21 876 8600
E reservations@grandeprovence.co.za



DOLPHIN ISLAND, Fiji offers 14-acres of Pacific private island beauty, romance and luxury 'castaway' time for a max. of 8 guests, on an exclusive-use basis.
HUKA LODGE, New Zealand, is famed for its natural beauty, legendary hospitality and absolute style since the 1920's. With just 25 rooms within 17-acres of manicured grounds.
Contact: T +64 7 378 5791
E reservations@hukalodge.co.nz
for both Huka Lodge & Dolphin Island reservations.

The Luxury Gift Guide...





























1. This beautiful pair of earrings is part of a collection of jewellery by **OTTOMANIA**. Beautiful handmade jewellery made of gemstones, 14K gold-fill, 9K gold and Sterling silver. The materials and colour combinations make this collection unique and elegant. Visit **www.ottomania.nl** for more details or call **001 23 7370426**. Also wholesale.
2. PAD LIFESTYLE is an online lifestyle collective offering many unique and inspiring home and fashion brands from across the world. With so many chic, curious and eclectic pieces to find – such as this gorgeous 100% Harris Tweed cape in 'Sienna Mix' by Cocoon Luxury Wear – it's definitely worth a look. Visit **www.padlifestyle.com**
3. THE GENTLEMEN'S WATCH CO hosts a diverse, yet defined collection of timepieces from independent designers. The featured Megir Yachtsman Chrono boasts a rose-gold polished stainless steel case that gracefully frames a handy 24-hour dial and precision stopwatch. Choose from 6 colour options, £39. Shop Megir at **www.gwcwatches.com** Quote CONDEDEC for 10% off, expires 30/11/15.
4. TALES FROM THE EARTH. Each of their handmade designs contains a message for the wearer and comes boxed with a storycard. This silver plated bangle has a hidden inscription inside the bracelet reading 'a life filled with adventure'. Six other secret messages available. **www.talesfromtheearth.com**
5. Winner of a prestigious award: **SVETLANA MARSHALL**'s jewellery is an inspiring and versatile form of art; women can express themselves through her intriguing pieces, draping the chains to enhance their natural line, just as a designer does with cloth. No woman wears them the same way. **www.svetlanamarshall.co.uk** Call **44 (0) 7552882785** or email **svetlana@svetlanamarshall.co.uk** to find out more.
6. BLUE VELVET, the home of contemporary and Luxury footwear direct from the heart of Europe. Always one step ahead, they have established themselves on their quality and first-rate service. Visit them at: 174 Kings Road, SW3 4UP or call **020 7376 7442**. Buy online: **www.bluevelvetshoes.com**
7. WOODWARDS LEATHER. Quality leather handbags from British artisans. Traditional hand craft with contemporary design. Designs for Ladies and Gentlemen, lovingly made right here in the UK. For more information call **01207 565954** or visit **www.woodwardsleather.co.uk**
8. LOS AMANTES' is a smooth smoky and sexy hand crafted mezcal with citrus and cucumber notes from Oaxaca Mexico. It is currently a favorite in the US, Mexico, Australia and will be coming soon to the UK. Visit **www.losamantes.com**
9. Visit **www.zaraschocolates.co.uk** to get your festive-flavours from the best-selling range of boxes of bites from **ZARAS CHOCOLATES**: the best local confectioner at the Bristol Good Food Awards in 2014 and 2015. Telephone **0117 9533892**.
10. PULLMAN EDITIONS designs, commissions and publishes striking original posters which capture the enduring appeal of Art Deco. Their newly-commissioned posters feature winter sports, glamorous resorts around the world, and the world's greatest historic automobiles. All £395 each. Call **020 7730 0547** or view and buy online at **www.pullmaneditions.com**
11. Combining heritage, art, design, evolution and technology **THE URBAN BOTANIST** gives you the next generation of house plant. For more information call **0800 783 3375** or visit **www.theurbanbotanist.co.uk**
12. LATHAM & NEVE – known for their stunning contemporary hand–made British jewellery since 1997. Featured is the unique Ripple Bangle in beaten silver and 18ct gold, £212 Ballroom bangles, everyday earrings, ravishing rings, and much much more… Buy online/stockists/brochure, visit **www.lathamandneve.co.uk**
13. L'ANZA's luxury Keratin Healing Oil Treatment keeps hair hydrated, reduces drying time by 75%, protects from heat damage up to 260 degrees and shields hair from UVA, UVB and UVC rays for ultra-soft, healthy looking hair. Call **01296 612062** or email **info@lanzaeurope.co.uk** for more information.
14. A fabulous range of ethically sourced, lovingly handcrafted Avarca sandals, authentically made on the Balearic Islands. For a fashion forward twist choose from our wide range of textured fabrics and gorgeous leathers, like bright block neon, animal prints, metallic leathers or natural nubucks. Whether you are travelling across the globe, from city to city or simply navigating London's underground maze, **PALMAIRA SANDALS** are a multi destination essential to see you through from dawn till dusk, beach to bar. Check out **www.palmairasandals.com** to see the full range or call **+44 (0)7873247133.**
15. SIMON WRIGHT is creating beautiful petite diamond Fiorella pendants. Each Fiorella pendant is individually made for you from a selection of natural fancy pink diamonds. Rare pink diamond and fine white diamond set in sparkling platinum. By appointment only. Contact: **020 7490 0665** or visit **www.sw-jewellery.com**



16. Showcasing the finest gianduja products from Turin, Italy, **BONIERI**'s traditional recipe chocolates and stylish 'Bella' selection boxes combine exquisite taste with Italian passion and style. Recently awarded 3 Great Taste gold stars, Bonieri's range includes DAIRY and GLUTEN FREE pralines, crumbly nougat and luxury spreads. Stockists include Selfridges and Harrods. Discover more online at **www.bonieri.com**

17. KERATIA offers the ultimate replica diamond jewellery in 18 carat gold, from £350. Complete peace of mind when travelling. Visit **www.keratia.com** 10% off with the offer code Traveller2015, expires 31st December 2015.

18. VINTAGE WATCH MOVEMENT CUFFLINKS. When these watches stopped who knew they would be reincarnated as really cool cufflinks? Crafted from 1920s to 1950s watch movements, set with their original ruby jewels, mounted as cufflinks and presented in a smart vintage inspired box. £49 – by Pretty Eccentric.
Visit **www.prettyeccentric.co.uk**

19. LUXAC. This smart new British brand uniquely combines the elegance of a handbag with the functionality of a rucksack. Handmade in Somerset, England from gorgeous Italian leathers and with witty bespoke linings, it's a really stylish solution to carrying your laptop or iPad – Luxac is the bag you have all been looking for. **www.luxac.co.uk info@luxac.co.uk**

20. PACHACUTI's commitment to stylish and sustainable design is exemplified through its collection of Fair Trade Panama Hats which can roll and pack away for travel. 10% off and free shipping by using this code: CNTraveller, expires 30/12/2015. Visit **www.panamas.co.uk** or contact them on **hats@panamas.co.uk**

21. ROBERT PIQUET's Duo Extraordinaire features two of the legendary brand's most spectacular offerings: Alameda and Visa de Robert Piguet. Worn individually or layered together, this sumptuous pairing is delicious and addictive featuring notes of candied patchouli, leather, pear and sandalwood. A Selfridges exclusive £180. To view full range visit **www.robertpiguetparfums.com**

22. The **LUCY FLINT DESIGN** jewellery collection features feminine, flower and bird designs, such as the sterling silver hummingbird necklace, along with irresistible pieces to be personalised. All are beautifully handcrafted in the workshop at their boutique in the historic town of Melton Mowbray. Shop online at **www.lucyflintdesign.co.uk** or call on **01664 850438.**

23. HAWTHORN RUCKSACKS. An ingenious design to thwart pickpockets at home and abroad – the zip lies on the wearer's back, meaning the only way to open this rucksack is to take it off! Handmade in London from the finest waxed canvas, leather and organic cotton, with two internal pockets and a padded laptop sleeve.
www.hawthorn-rucksacks.co.uk or call **07737 963617.**

24. The Daphne Signature Silver from **DU MAURIER WATCHES** is now available on this fabulous hot pink strap. Team this stunning Swiss made, Limited Edition watch with bold, bright colour this winter to chase away the gloom. Also available on pastel pink, pale blue, red and black straps. Daphne Signature £440. See the full collection at **www.dumaurierwatches.com** or call **0845 5193074**.

25. This season can be the best for luxury shopping. Whether it is chic swimwear for your winter sun holiday or designer lingerie for a Christmas gift there is plenty to explore at **ESSILI.** Shop for your season's favourites at **Essili.com** and enter traveller11 For a 10% discount code, expires 06.12.2015. For more information email: **office@essili.com**

26. ARTS & SCENTS is a new and exciting German company creating unique perfumes. Unusual combinations of rare natural materials and fragrance oils result in astonishing effects in every scent composition that they offer. Arts & Scents produce their perfumes in the traditional European perfumers method, which enables them to create truly outstanding scent bases. The use of special plant material, melted with emergent fragrance compounds, built the heart of their perfumes. Visit **www.artsandscents.com** to view their collections.

27. CHANII B shoes is an Obsession for shoes and handbags. Limited edition and bespoke designer footwear and accessories from designer Chantal Pilon flagship shop in Bath 9 Milsom Place. Call **01225 333693** or online **chaniibshoes.com**

28. ILCSI NATURAL COSMETICS. Ilcsi is the symbol of natural and highly effective phytocosmetics since 1958. The fructose and fruit acid content of Ilcsi's sweet smelling Sour Cherry & Blackthorn Gel Mask works to hydrate and tone skin. Buy online **www.ilcsi-natural-cosmetics.co.uk** or email **info@ilcsi-natural-cosmetics.co.uk**

29. THE KING OF SOHO. Encapsulating the rich creativity and unique lifestyle of the effervescent London district the King of Soho delicately combines citrusy grapefruit with classic juniper to create a perfectly balanced London Dry Gin. The King of Soho is ideal in cocktails where the spirit is King or served neat over ice. The King of Soho is available from top bars and a wide range of popular outlets nationwide. Visit **www.kingofsohodrinks.com** or call **+44 (0)1932 252100**.

30. Say it with Bacon. **CURE & SIMPLE** deliver premium bacon straight to your door – first class post. Their all natural, hand cured, air dried bacon is made from British pigs raised in Suffolk's countryside and available in a range of mouth-watering flavours created by a Michelin rated chef, offered via a subscription service or as a personalised gift – bacon for every occasion! Superior bacon £5.95 200gms by Cure & Simple. Email **hello@cureandsimple.com** or visit **www.cureandsimple.com**

The Luxury Gift Guide... Continued























31. HENK. Hard shell, smart core made out of carbon and extremely lightweight. Fully customizable with maximum space for business travelers. For connoisseurs, a removable humidor is integrated. Hand made in Germany, starting at €6,900. Visit **www.henk.com** or call **+49 89452 067427**.

32. MEL MILLIS Phytonutri Qi Skincare – A luxury award winning natural skincare line created to harmoniously unite innovative cutting edge science and ancient wisdoms, with bio-organic formulae harnessed from the purest phytonutrient rich actives, peptides and prebiotics. Scientifically proven to help reduce the signs of ageing whilst allowing us to reconnect with the essence of nature. Available to purchase from **www.melmillis.co.uk**

33. PEVONIA has made this year's Christmas shopping a whole lot easier with stunning gift sets that offer something for everyone. These luxury festive present ideas are available for a limited time only. So what are you waiting for? Give the gift of flawless skin this Christmas with Pevonia. **www.pevonia.co.uk**

34. SPENCER DEVINE. Brooklyn based SPENCER DEVINE specialises in versatile leather hand and travel bags, all locally hand constructed in small batches. Each style is thoughtfully designed to be able to transition between backpack, tote, and handheld briefcase with just a few pulls of the straps. Visit **www.spencerdevine.com** or email **hello@spencerdevine.com**

35. Their bold, bright designs are classic yet contemporary. **SOMERVILLE SCARVES** use the best quality materials for their products. Visit **www.somervillescarves.com** to find out more or call **0208 963 1816.**

36. MC ALSON is a Belgian boxer short brand that equals quality, originality and comfort. Mc Alson boxers fit perfectly thanks to their interior jersey cotton pouch. They are 100% cotton and bring either a classic or a quirky touch. A true match for every Dapper Dan out there. Visit **www.mcalson.com** email **info@mcalson.com** or call **+32 9 231 74 37**.

37. Calling all serious art collectors and fashionistas, we're obsessed with artist Rebecca Rose's '**SCULPTURINGS**' in galleries across Los Angeles, Beijing, New York and now Art Basel Miami Beach. If you're escaping to the sandy shores of South Beach this December, explore her solid Sterling works of wearable art in person at SCOPE and Aqua Art Fairs during Art Basel. **www.sculpturings.com** or call: **+001 323 377 3883.**

38. CHEEKY MONKEY TREEHOUSES specialise in the design and build of bespoke tree houses to complement your garden perfectly. They can also undertake European and worldwide commissions. Visit **www.cheekymonkeytreehouses.com** or call **01403 732 452** for more information.

39. FLORA HARRISON designs and produces a beautiful range of elegant leather shoes and fabulous handbags. Pictured here is the 'Siena' clutch, crafted from the finest kid leather and snake scales to complete the look, £495. Visit **www.floraharrison.com** to view the collection.

40. L'ETOILE SPORT is a New York City based brand that designs sportswear for the stylish, classy woman. Their philosophy is play all day, combining function and high end fashion. To view their full collection visit **www.letoilesport.com**

41. AMBER EVE creates luxury handmade candles to inspire your senses. Highly scented with natural fragrances, they will bring an edge and sophistication to your home. For their full collection visit **www.ambereve.co.uk** call them on **07840 372782** or email them at **info@ambereve.co.uk**

42. Never run out of memory again on your iPhone or iPad with **LEEF IBRIDGE.** Compact, convenient and available up to an industry-first 256GB capacity, this gives users more storage space without needing to delete treasured photos, videos or music. **www.leefco.com**

43. Introducing fragrances made mobile. **PERPHONE®** is an elegant perfume bottle designed for your iPhone. This stylish smartphone case carries Galimard perfumes in a replaceable atomising unit. When the fragrance runs out, simply pop in a refill! Perfect for the person who needs fragrance on the go, but doesn't want to carry a heavy perfume bottle. Discover more at **www.perphone.com**

44. KABLOOM make innovative, fun and environmentally friendly products inspired by their interactions with nature and the urban environment. Their Seedboms are friendly bombs filled with flower power. Be a Guerrilla Gardener and join forces with nature to transform unloved spaces with a blast of colour! Visit **www.kabloom.co.uk** or call **0141 423 6671**.

45. MADEBYNATIVE's classically inspired wallets and bags are crafted using traditional techniques and use ethically sourced vegetable tanned leathers. Built to last and to tell a story, their beautiful products will develop a natural patina with time, becoming truly an extension of the owner. **www.madebynative.com**

46. D. R. HARRIS Almond Oil Soap always goes down well at this time of year as a gift or present to a host. A blend of Rose Geranium, Cinnamon and Clove adds spice to winter baths. Available at the newly re-opened flagship store at 29 St. James's Street, SW1. Visit **www.drharris.co.uk**

On The Move...Down on The Piste

Condé Nast Traveller



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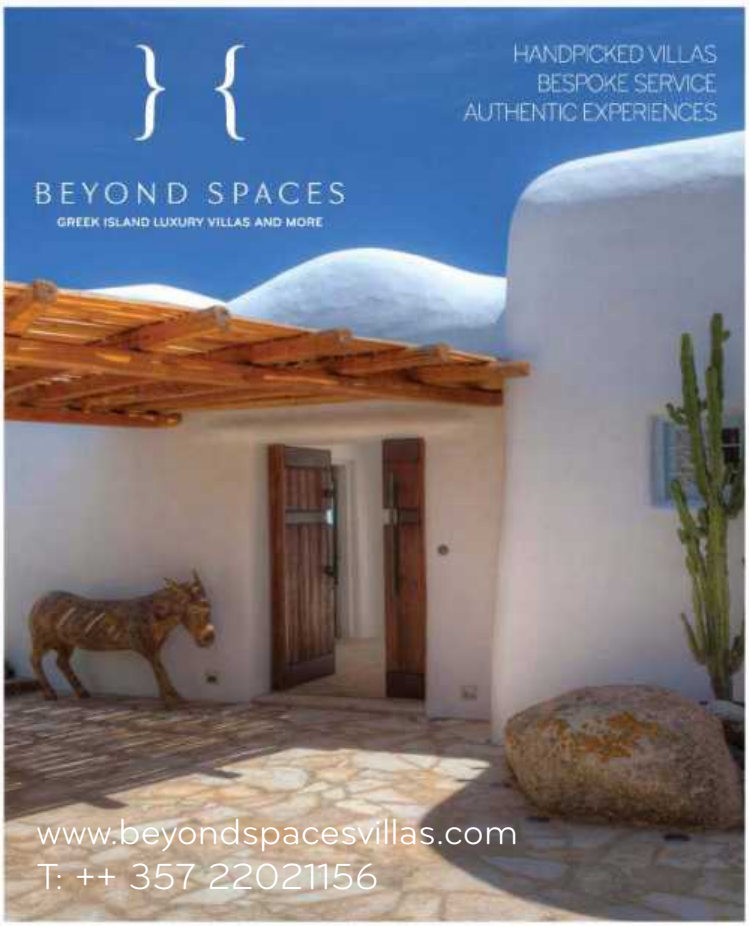
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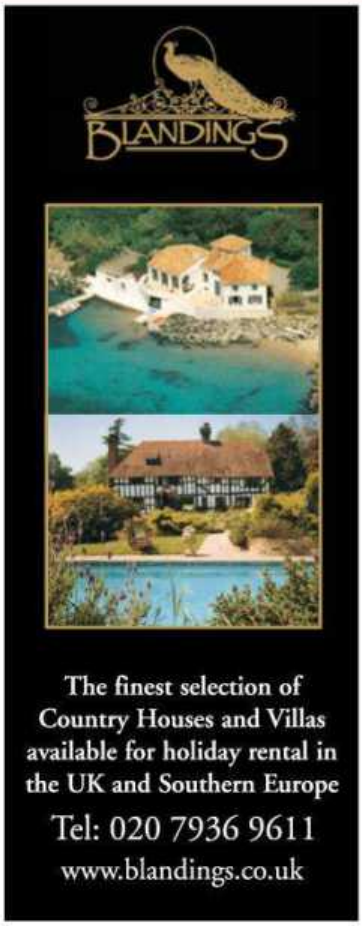
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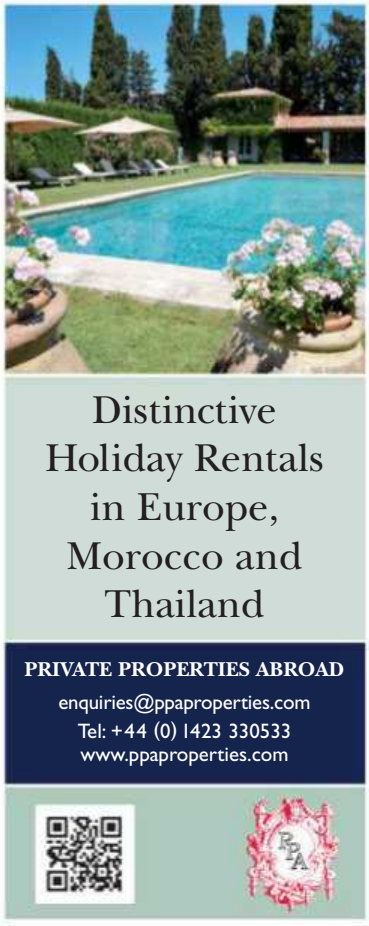
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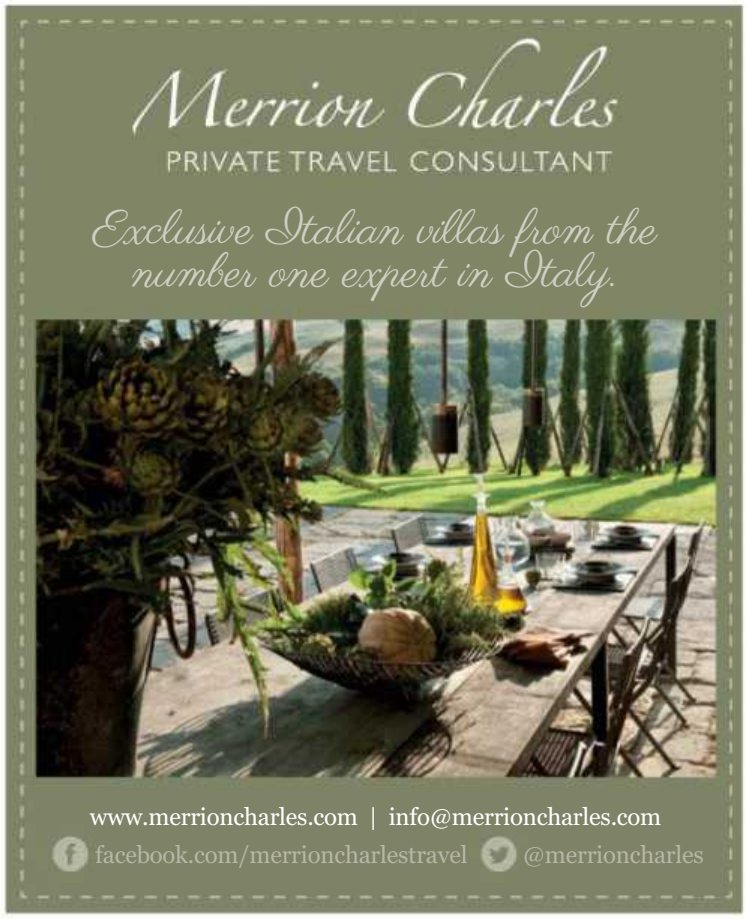
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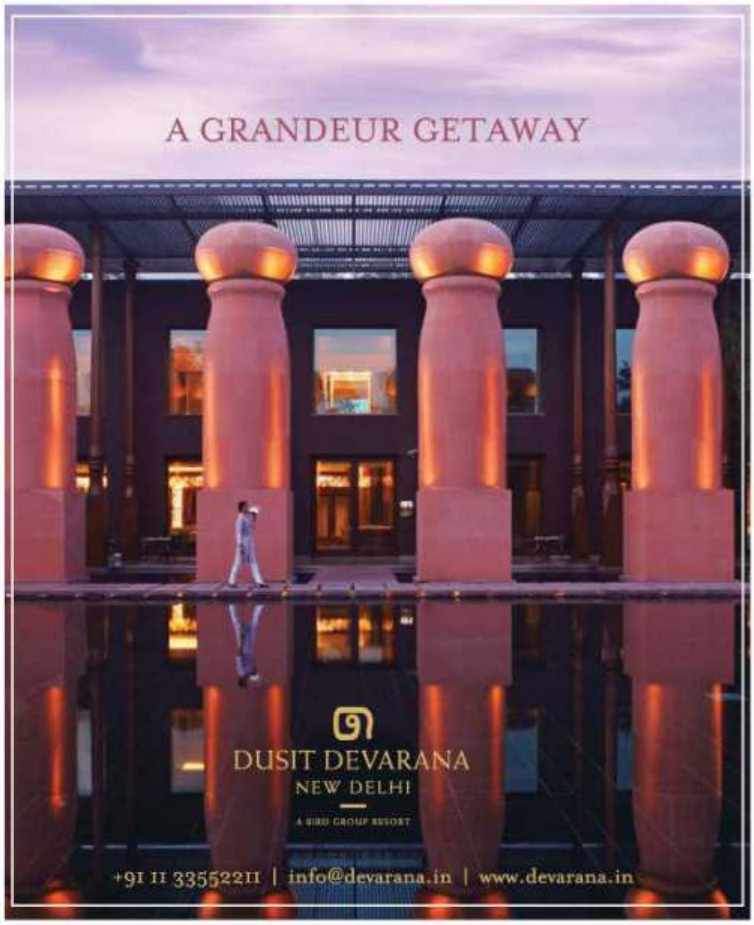
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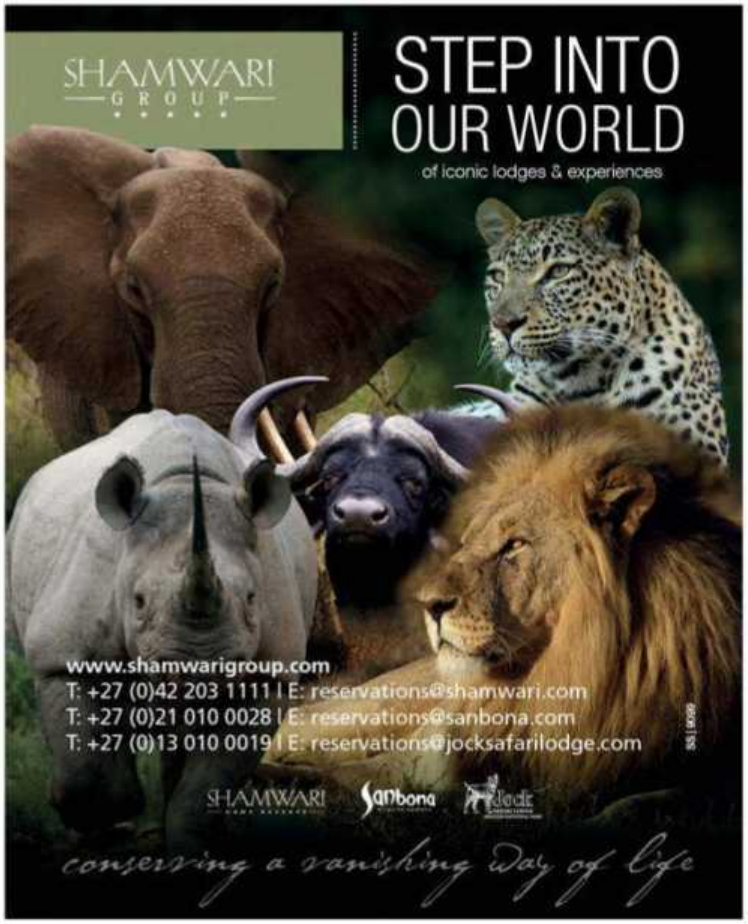


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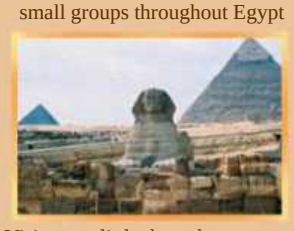




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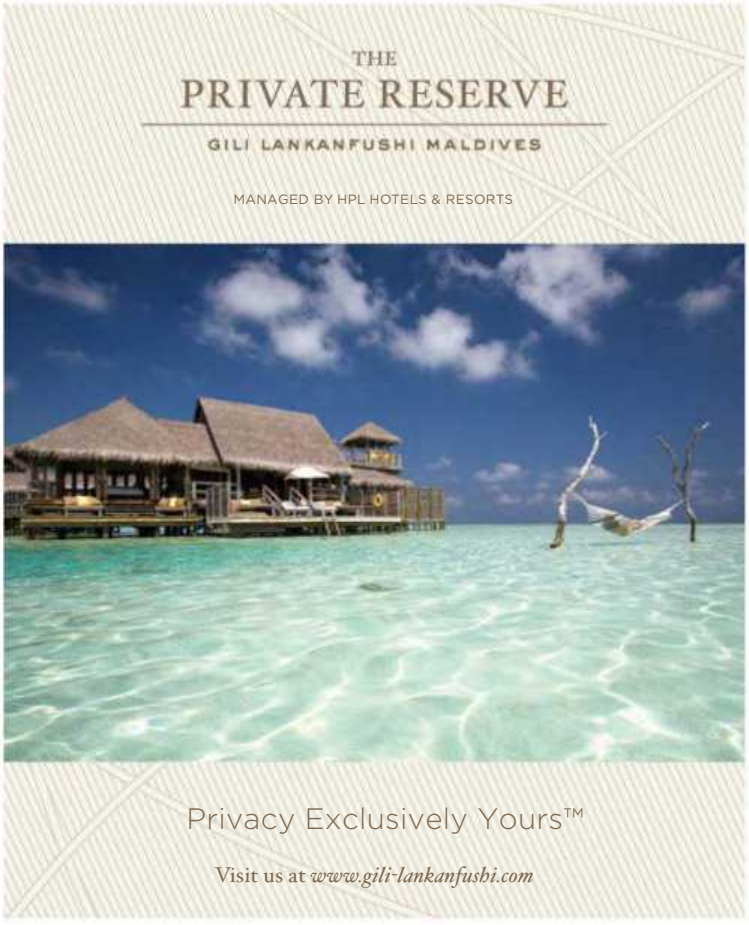
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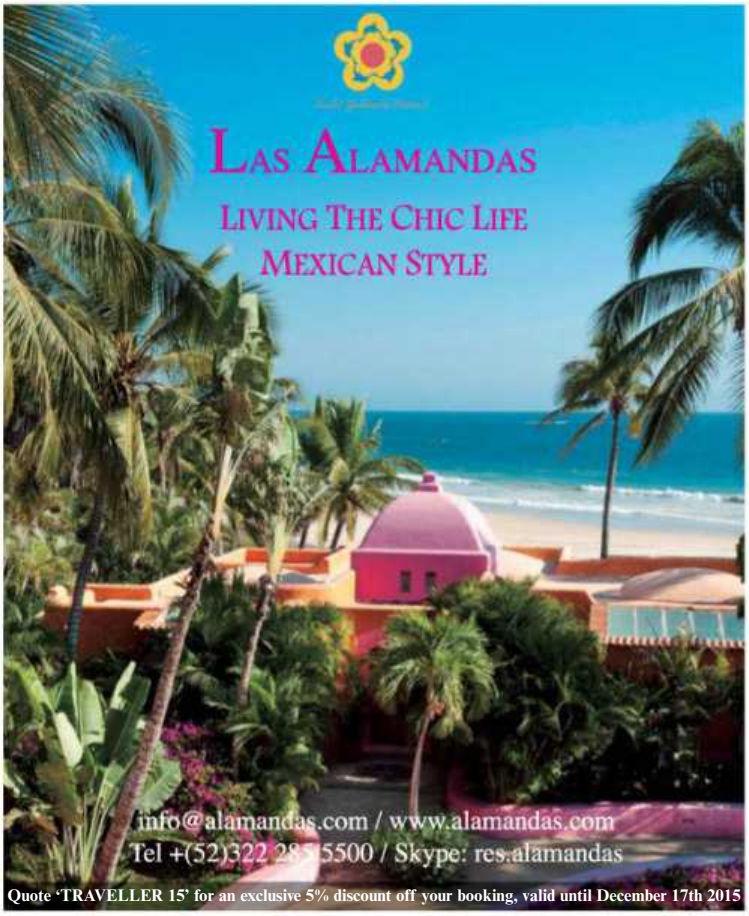
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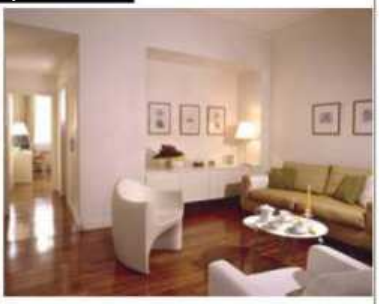
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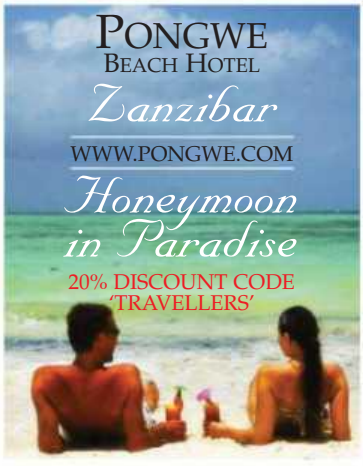
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ROOM WITH A VIEW

WHERE ARE WE? ANGAMA MARA, KENYA

WHY WE LOVE IT There's a chink of sunrise. A fuzzy horizon, 60 breathtaking kilometres away, becomes defined, as do smudges of acacia. From your bed, atop the Oloolulo escarpment, the Maasai Mara begins to take shape and in the distance hot-air balloons sail past. This 30-tent safari lodge is the newest, finest addition to the world's greatest game reserve. The plot, teetering on the edge of the Mara Triangle, is unspeakably special. It's managed by the Fitzgeralds, a husband-and-wife team who headed up andBeyond, the Africa specialist travel company; they say Angama is the beneficiary of their 30 years of experimenting in the high-end safari game. It's pretty near perfect. Designed by Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens (Ngorongoro Crater Lodge, North Island), it has red-brick cones and towers, loft-like interiors and a walled pool; lateral-living tents are by Jan Allan, wide and shallow with no pesky zips or canvas flaps. And inside, there are roll-top bathtubs and retro furnishings. Yet all this is upstaged by the 11-metre glass frontage and decks with rocking chairs to watch raptors ride the thermals on the rim of the Great Rift Valley. There's another view that needs a mention: the one from a kopje at the spot where Streep and Redford picnicked in *Out of Africa*, right in the middle of the property. The truth is we all ache for a farm in Africa; a week here may be the next best thing. MICHELLE JANA CHAN

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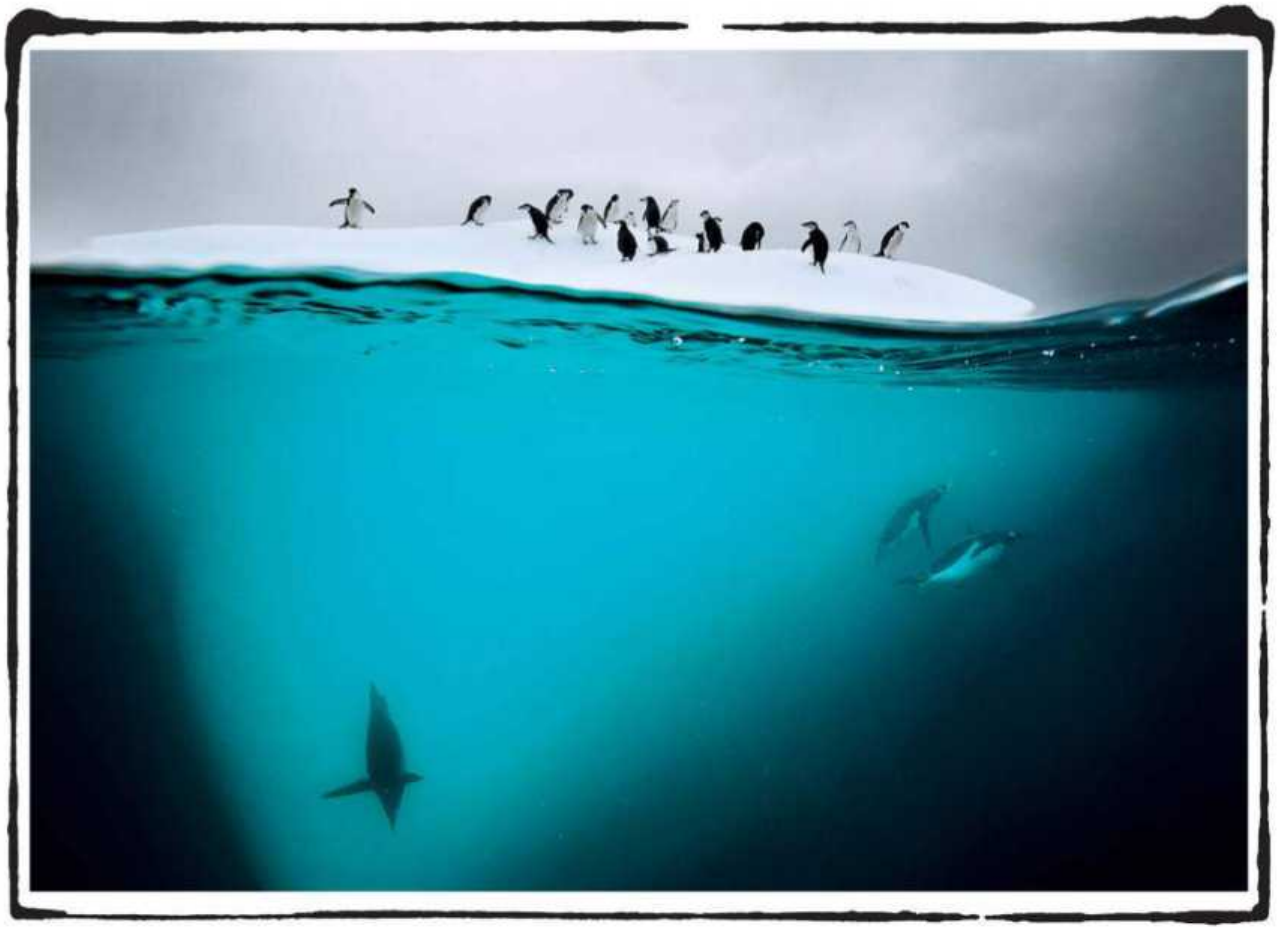




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There's something wonderfully hypnotic about sitting on deck and watching the landscape drift slowly by. Colossal chunks of ice in Greenland. Golden pagodas like top hats on lush green hillsides in Burma. Ghostly lighthouses beaming through the thick Canadian fog. It's hands-down one of the best things about travelling by boat. There's also no buzz-kill of customs, and no hassle of packing and repacking as you explore tiny dots on the map that often can't be seen any other way. New voyages are being added to itineraries all the time, including a go-slow sailing trip along the Red River in Vietnam and a wine-tasting tour of the Loire. And just like the routes themselves, the style and size of vessel varies wildly. You can go island-hopping on an elegant tall ship in Cuba, cross the Baltic on an old-school liner which lays on art classes, ballroom-dancing lessons and entertainment every night of the week, or tick off half of Europe on a megayacht. But whichever you choose, there's always the kick of waking up in your cabin and wondering what new heart-stopping view awaits outside the window today.

EMMA LOVE, CRUISE EDITOR

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WEST AFRICA

This thrilling route along one side of the continent is turning explorers' heads with pioneering ports of call

I'm in the sleepy port town of Namibe, Angola, when I pull back the cabin curtains to find camera crews, workers in high-vis orange jackets and a radio DJ with shiny gold headphones wrapped around his neck, all snapping pictures of our boat, the 132-passenger *Silver Explorer*. Next to them, members of the local Mucubal tribe dressed in black-and-white headdresses and denim skirts, with tiny strings of shells around their ankles, are dancing and chanting. It's the first time a cruise ship has ever stopped here, which explains the buzz.

Afterwards, everyone piles into minibuses for the hour-and-a-half ride to Arco, a dry lake surrounded by stunning, sand-coloured rock formations (the excursions, along with everything else such as food and drink, are included). It's a lunar-like landscape, grittier and greener in places than the previous day in Namibia, where we rode in 4x4s over sand dunes to the shore. There, we saw hundreds of shrimp-pink flamingos balancing on one leg in Walvis Bay; ate dinner on linen-covered tables in the desert by candlelight to the sound of a youth choir singing about chicken fights and broken bicycles; and took a catamaran out close enough to a seal colony to get a whiff of it, sipping thimbles of sherry and shucking oysters as pelicans sat on the roof and the sharp, blade-like fin of mola mola fish sliced through the water.

During sea days – and there are many on the mammoth 23-day journey from Cape Town to Praia – time is filled with optional lectures from the expedition team (they are also screened live on television in the cabins) on subjects such as the bill-clacking, bonding displays of the Tristan albatross and an astronomy lesson on identifying Orion's Belt. There are mid-morning cocktail tastings, classes on tying knots (surprisingly gripping in a boy-scout kind of way) and afternoon-tea trivia quizzes. My fellow passengers are a well-travelled gang (retired cattle farmers from Australia, a surgeon and his wife from Texas whose children have flown the nest, a professional photographer from Brighton) and spend hours swapping stories over glasses of Champagne. If the *Silver Explorer*'s interior design is a little old-fashioned, it comes up trumps in other ways: there's butler service, Bulgari products in the bathrooms and truly excellent food ('Hot rocks' on deck, where you cook your own steak on a slab of lava stone by a red moon, is a real highlight).

One of my final ports of call before leaving the ship as it continues north is Lobito, where we take a vintage 1930s train to Benguela. Children from local villages run alongside waving, and women working in the fields carry plastic bowls on their heads (I am obsessed with what they are transporting: once I saw a whole fruit platter, another time, cartons of delicately balanced hard-boiled eggs). Then it's on to Luanda, where we take a speed boat to Mussulo peninsula to lunch on fresh lobster and barter for wooden bowls and colourful paintings of dandyish fisherman at Benfica market. On the way back there's bumper-to-bumper traffic so our police escort simply guides the driver the wrong way down the street to keep us moving. This is Silversea in a nutshell: a seriously slick operation that runs like clockwork. EMMA LOVE

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Silversea (+44 844 251 0837; www.silversea.com) offers a 23-day voyage on board the *Silver Explorer* from £9,250 per person staying in a View Suite, subject to availability. The trip departs from Cape Town on 23 March 2016, calling at Lüderitz, Walvis Bay, Namibe, Lobito, Luanda, Pointe-Noire, São Tomé, Kribi, Limbe, Cotonou, Lomé, Takoradi, Freetown and Banjul before arriving at Dakar



PHOTOGRAPH: **ALISTAIR TAYLOR-YOUNG**

BEST FOR MARVELLOUS MYTHOLOGY

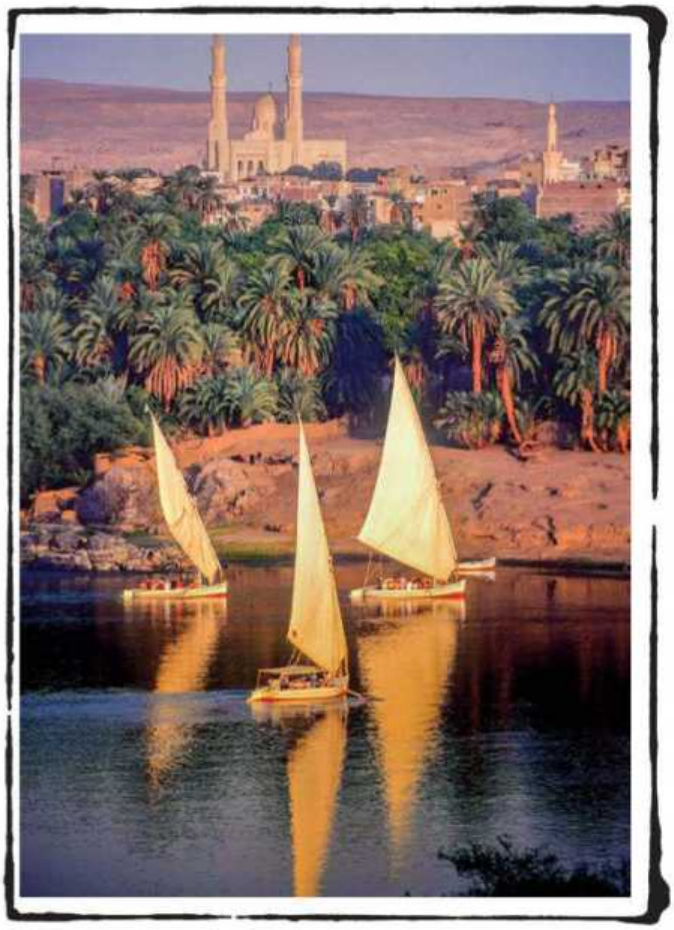




THE NILE

It's the best time in decades to see this Grand Tour hot spot without others cramping its style

Tutankhamun was not particularly significant in the history of ancient Egypt but the untold treasures found inside his tomb, and rumours of a curse placed on those who excavated it in 1922, make him the most famous king ever to have ruled. His mummy rests in the Valley of the Kings, on the West Bank of the Nile. Many of Egypt's highlights are conveniently set beside the river so a voyage is the most practical way to see them. Before the revolution there were 300 cruise ships on the Nile at any one time. Now there are about 30. The *Oberoi Zahra* is by far the smartest. It sails from Luxor to Aswan and back, and runs as smoothly as any five-star hotel, no matter how many guests are on board. Every meal is an occasion: four-courses of Egyptian and global food such as herb-crusted hammur (a fish), lentil soup, *za'atar*-spiced chicken and hibiscus sorbet. There's a spa, hair salon, cigar lounge and the largest swimming pool on the Nile. The ship is matched only by sister ship *The Oberoi Philae*, which was refitted and scaled down from 58 to 18 cabins before its re-launch this October. The cleverly designed itinerary is where *Zahra* comes into its own: days are planned around the movements of other boats, so even if there are crowds you miss them. At Quina we visit the Dendera Temple before sailing back up to Karnak and Luxor Temples, Medinet Habu and the Luxor Museum. Then it's onwards to Edfu and the ruins of the Ptolemaic-era Temple of Horus, the falcon-headed god, and right past the temple at Kom Ombo, once teeming with crocodiles. We see fishermen navigating reed islands, and farmers with buffalo tending crops that form a green strip along the river. Birds mock the speed at which we travel, zipping past us, pausing only to snatch dinner from the water. As we reach Aswan, the light changes. Even the granite quarries have a hold on me. It's hard to believe the ancient Egyptians cut, sailed and erected 450-tonne obelisks hundreds of miles from here. Despite all our technological inventions, I can't help but wonder if the human race has advanced that much since. HAZEL LUBBOCK



SAIL AWAY

Steppes Travel (+44 843 778 9926; www.steppestravel.com) offers a eight-night trip from £2,465 per person, with five nights on *The Oberoi Zahra* and three at Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at Nile Plaza, including Egypt Air flights, internal flights, transfers and privately guided touring in Cairo. This price is a special offer valid until 22 December 2015. For more information, visit www.gotoegypt.org

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THE LOIRE

Château-hop along France's most regal waterway on a new route that spans centuries of history

Historic, beautiful and – so it is said with typical Gallic flair – France's most feminine and capricious river, the Loire is decorated with Renaissance châteaux and lorded over by lush vineyards that produce some of the world's most celebrated wines. She has also never been tamed. Her banks flood in winter, pouring over manmade levees, while in summer the water drains to a few inches, revealing treacherous sandbanks and acting as a natural barricade to shipping for all but the smallest of fishing punts. Now CroisiEurope, France's biggest river-cruising company, is the first to offer overnight trips on this fabled waterway, engineering an ingenious design to accommodate mother nature. By fitting paddle wheels, more than five metres in diameter, both port and starboard, and combining this with her flat bottom and driftwood lightness, the 96-passenger, three-deck *Loire Princesse* can cross water seemingly not much deeper than a puddle. 'We can even sail with the bottom touching the sand,' says captain Benoit Amand proudly, 'and our paddles are set higher than propellers so they don't disturb the river bed or the fish.' I join the boat on its maiden six-day voyage as it sets off downstream from the river port of Nantes to St Nazaire, where the Loire meets the great rollers of the Atlantic, before turning for the 136km passage upstream to Angers, once the castle stronghold of Plantagenet kings. There are no other craft on the river. And no sound save for the occasional splash of a *ragondin*, a whiskery native beaver that is startled by our unprecedented invasion of its domain. On board, the upper cabins with picture windows and private balconies are the best and the contemporary bar is cheered up with rich, plum-coloured Missoni fabrics. There is no choice of menu in the single-service dining room, but no need for concern. The food, as expected from a French company, is delicious and includes plenty of simple fish dishes: cod fillet in aniseed sauce with ratatouille and crispy potatoes or hake with lobster sauce and stuffed *agnoletti*, each served with local Sancerre and Muscadet wines. It is not universally known that many of the great châteaux are not actually on the Loire itself but on the calmer, pretty tributaries such as the Cher and the Indre. We take a coach for all our visits, the first to the fortress at Angers, which broods over the Maine. Here, a priceless 100-metre-long medieval tapestry, inspired by biblical stories of the saints' crusades against evil, was saved from destruction during the French Revolution when the sans-culottes used it as horse blankets.

How glorious it must have been to alight from your gondola, flags embroidered with your coat of arms, to the other châteaux on our itinerary: d'Azay-le-Rideau, a swan of a Ducal mansion on the Indre; and Villandry, gracing the Cher, where gardens of box hedges have been manicured to represent symbols of love. Finally, we move onto the Ussé, the fairy-tale castle on the edge of a black wood forest, where a wicked witch cast an incantation on Sleeping Beauty and put her in a slumber for 100 years. It sounds fanciful, but I too feel as if I have been put under a spell by the Loire. ROD GILCHRIST



THERE ARE NO OTHER CRAFT ON THE RIVER. AND NO SOUND SAVE FOR THE SPLASH OF A NATIVE BEAVER



SAIL AWAY

Ponders Travel (+44 1954 232802; www.ponderstravel.co.uk) offers a six-day cruise on CroisiEurope's *Loire Princesse* from £1,259 per person, including all meals, most drinks, flights and transfers

PHOTOGRAPHS: **MICHAEL PAUL**



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VIETNAM

Steam alongside technicolour landscapes on a slow adventure down the Red River

Think of cruising in Vietnam and it's the Mekong that springs to mind, while the less-well-known Red River – which begins in the Yunnan province of China and was once a lucrative trade route between the two countries – has, until now, been largely forgotten. The first to tackle this unexplored territory is river-cruise specialist Pandaw, an authority on South-east Asia with a 14-strong fleet of vessels.

Pandaw has launched an 11-night itinerary, with a pre-cruise stop in Hanoi before sailing to Halong Bay, where nearly 2,000 craggy islets poke up from the vast, deep-blue waters – every one of them a ringer for a Bond-baddie lair. If only their limestone tops would suddenly creak open to allow a helicopter to swoop in.

Along the way we pass the Hoa Ha mountains and tropical Ba Vi National Park, the peace and quiet only broken by the occasional sound of children, trussed up like ducklings in orange life jackets, squealing and splashing on the river's edge. Many of my fellow guests are self-proclaimed Pandaw 'repeat offenders', lured to book again after falling for the handcrafted, paddle-steamer-style boats that are modelled on the designs of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, a ferry company once managed by Glasgow-based P Henderson & Co, which operated in Burma from 1865 to 1948.

On the immaculate 32-berth, brass and teak *RV Angkor Pandaw*, the air-conditioned cabins are small but charming (no mini-bars or televisions – a conscious decision to encourage guests to spend more time socialising on deck); the guides are young, Vietnamese and full of self-deprecating, culture-crossing humour.

The daily schedule is reassuringly repetitive: excursions set off at 8am with destinations varying wildly, from lining up to gaze at Ho Chi Minh's embalmed body in Hanoi to sampling fiery rice wine in a villager's home-on-stilts in Hao Ha. We always return before the day's most intense temperatures strike, hungry for lunch prepared with local ingredients – perhaps *pho* noodle soup or grilled rice and fish, followed by jackfruit, the more palatable and friendly cousin to the notorious durian.

Afternoons are lavishly empty, spent idling on a lounger as a green screen of scenery slides by. As the sun sinks and bats flit across the sky, cocktails are served (the Saigon Surprise is potent: soda laced with generous pours of blue curaçao and vodka), then, in the evenings, Vietnam-related films are shown on the dining-room projector screen – yes, *Good Morning, Vietnam* but also *Heaven & Earth*, *The Quiet American* and a documentary about the history of Pandaw's flotilla.

Rather like a school trip (but for predominantly Australian students, average age 60), every detail is arranged. The close quarters and interaction – dining tables seat six rather than two, so being antisocial is not an option – give a classroom feel: the group's jokers and rambunctious types quickly become clear. While you'll remember the characters you clink highball glasses with, it'll be those afternoons of quiet cruising and the feeling of feet on sun-hot mahogany, that lingers longest. BECKY LUCAS

SAIL AWAY

Red Savannah (+44 1242 787800: www.redsavannah.com) offers an 11-night trip from £2,650 per person. It includes one night at the Sofitel Plaza Hanoi and 10 nights on the *Angkor Pandaw*, with meals, drinks, excursions, transfers and London-Hanoi flights (via Doha) with Qatar Airways

PHOTOGRAPH: SHUTTERSTOCK



INDONESIA

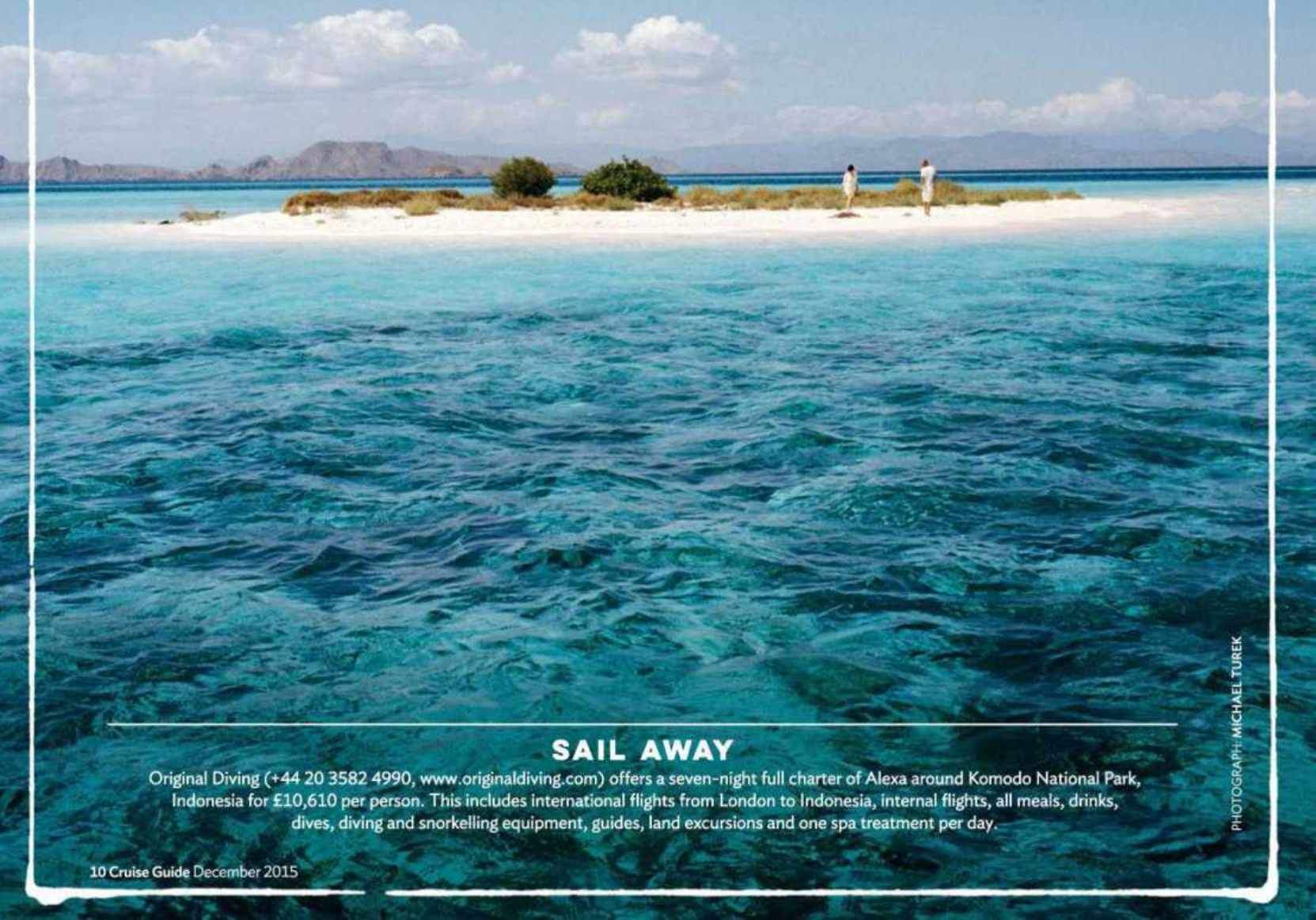
On a spicy sail boat made for two, plot your own course in the land of dragons

There's cinnamon on the wind. Up ahead, the peaks of Komodo island are softened as the rain, tinted by the last of the sunlight, falls in sheets of gold. Under the growing cover of darkness, the ocean swims with the reflection of early stars and a sudden blaze of plankton. I'm onboard *Alexa*, a gorgeous *phinisi* for two that sails the Indonesian archipelago from Labuan Bajo on the edge of the Komodo National Park – famous for its komodo dragon, the world's largest lizard species – and back, or farther south to the island of Sumba.

The real boon is being able to do what you like, whenever you please (any route can be requested on trips that last upwards of three nights, from popular surf spot Bima on the coast of Sumbawa to the more relaxed, hippie Gili Islands). Sometimes I rise early to tiptoe across volcanic ridgelines and leave footprints on candyfloss-pink beaches; other times, I sleep late then tumble into the waves, swimming underwater as giant trevallies shoot past and manta rays swerve overhead.

From afar, the *Alexa* is set apart by a white exterior that defies the more typical varnished wood. It's a bold move by owner Veronika Blomgren but perhaps not surprising: Details, her Moscow-based interior-design school, is the most esteemed in Russia. A footloose style sweeps through the interiors in a palette of cream, powder blue and fawn and the exclusive-use master cabin – the ship's only guest cabin – sings of Cornwall and Santorini in equal measure; ivory curtains part before surreal, ever-changing vistas; pewter starfish cling to sliding doors that open onto a balcony; and artfully placed Balinese antiques keep the essence of Indonesia in sight. There's also a living/dining area for tucking into bowls of ginger and lemongrass-infused broth, tangy green papaya salads and butter cake drenched in brandy syrup, and outside decks with daybeds for starlit (or pre-cocktail) slumber.

The seven crew – including a massage therapist – are mostly Indonesian. But perhaps the biggest testament to *Alexa*'s magnetism is her devoted captain, Taufik, a man of few words who answers only to 'Cap'. *Alexa* was originally crafted as a cargo ship in his village on a nearby tiny island in 2007, and until her makeover two years ago, Cap was tasked with navigating her across the spinning currents and straits of the Flores Sea, carrying spices from one isle to another. Cap's love for the ship remains unfaltering; most nights he shuns his berth in favour of the wheelhouse, sleeping curled up behind the helm. It seems fitting that he was destined to continue sailing her between these islands, where arid hills melt into paraiba-blue bays and mermaids seem more than just a legend. BELLA VAN POL



PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL TUREK

SAIL AWAY

Original Diving (+44 20 3582 4990, www.originaldiving.com) offers a seven-night full charter of Alexa around Komodo National Park, Indonesia for £10,610 per person. This includes international flights from London to Indonesia, internal flights, all meals, drinks, dives, diving and snorkelling equipment, guides, land excursions and one spa treatment per day.

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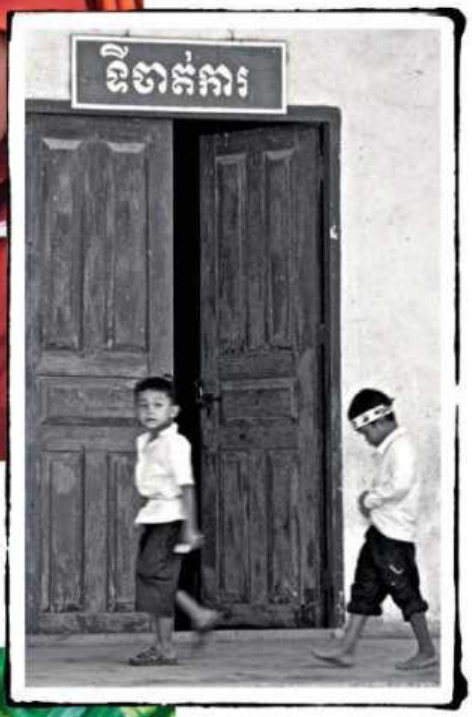


CAMBODIA

Dock the boat and bike along the mighty Mekong

The vibe on the *Aqua Mekong* – the only one of Aqua Expeditions' three-ship fleet to sail through Cambodia and Vietnam – is as minimalist and zen as the lobby of the Park Hyatt in Tokyo. Just like the other Aqua boats, it is small and very well kitted out, and not at all what you would expect to find on a cruise trip. The top deck has a glass-walled bar with views in every direction, a games room, cinema, gym and plunge pool. In the family-style dining room guests tuck into dishes such as Kampo mud crab with basil, chillies and peppercorns and sour-orange curry with Mekong river fish (the menu is overseen by executive chef David Thompson of Nahm restaurant fame). And the slick design of the 20 vast suites, with Ekowood floors, day-beds, slate-grey walls and tan leather chairs, makes it hard to leave the air-conditioned comfort of the boat. But the whole point of this four-night trip is to do exactly that.

Each day guests can go ashore with brilliant and knowledgeable guides to explore villages and farmlands on foot, mountain bike, tuk-tuk or ox-cart and get a glimpse of rural Cambodian life (despite the 40 C heat, I choose the bicycle every time). Much centres around the river – the main source of food – which is under threat: damming in Laos means fishermen are already experiencing lower levels of water and there are 18 further dams planned. The landscape is beautiful. We pedal past green paddy fields with tall palms and thatched, stilted huts. Everyone smiles, waves and calls out 'hello'. The friendliness is infectious and, after 20 years of silent commuting on London's Underground, incredibly liberating. When we stop, we are immediately surrounded by swarms of curious children. They have rarely seen a Westerner in the flesh and want to practise their English (their knowledge of which, I quickly realise, extends to 'How are you?', but not to my reply). Unintimidated, they stand and stare. I don't know what to do, so I blow a raspberry and the group shrieks with laughter: it turns out that fart noises are hilarious to children the world over and it becomes my fail-safe icebreaker.



We rise early to see silversmiths in Koh Chen, watch silk weavers at work in Koh Oknha Tey and visit the island of Kampong Chhnang where men at a makeshift barbershop laugh and pose for pictures mid haircut. These are the magic moments, and a much more grassroots experience than I could ever have imagined. MATTHEW BUCK

EVERYONE CALLS OUT 'HELLO'. AFTER YEARS OF SILENT COMMUTING IN LONDON, IT'S SO LIBERATING



SAIL AWAY

Wexas Travel (+44 20 7838 5892; www.wexas.com) offers a 10-night package from £4,495 per person. This includes return flights with Vietnam Airlines, private transfers, two nights B&B at Raffles Grand d'Angkor, two nights B&B at Raffles Le Royal, and an all-inclusive four-night cruise from Siem Reap to Phnom Penh on the *Aqua Mekong*. It also includes a full day sightseeing tour of Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom city and a full day sightseeing tour of Phnom Penh

PHOTOGRAPHS: **MATTHEW BUCK**



PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

GREENLAND

This is one of the last great wildernesses. Wrap up in warm layers like a bear and learn Innuit survival skills

In Greenland, no towns or settlements are connected by road so the most sensible way to explore is by water. Yet even before I board Hurtigruten's explorer ship *MS Fram* for its summer Arctic Wilderness Adventure, the original itinerary is scrapped. Too much ice in the Kangerlussuaq fjord means a diversion to the capital Nuuk, which becomes our starting point. This being June, I wasn't expecting so much ice but a harsh winter means it is a constant, mesmerising backdrop.

At Qasigiannguit on Greenland's west coast, 10 of us pull kayaks along a pebbly beach and paddle across the bay, weaving around fishing boats to a soundtrack of howling huskies and fizzing sea, as lumps break off icebergs and drop into the bay. Further north, at Uummannaq, it's my turn to get kitted up and go cruising on a 12-seat boat to see ice close up. If that isn't enough solid water, there's the Ilulissat Icefjord, a UNESCO World Heritage site, linked to the most active glacier in the world, producing 20 billion tons of icebergs a year. I hike alongside gushing streams and trudge through snow to Holmens Bakke, where celebrations take place to mark the return of the sun after the winter.

A trip here is also about the people. Each day, we dock at tiny settlements where there are optional organised excursions with the expedition staff – a mix of Greenlanders, climate-change experts and geographers. There is a talk by a polar-bear hunter; at another stop we piece together a football team and are trounced (the opposition's average age is 16; ours, at least 40). We hear a story about a community that sold enough whale blubber to pay for a timber church, and we take *kaffemik* in a villager's house. An Innuit demonstrates 35 ways to do an arctic roll (staying in a kayak while turning in the water) and the owners of the Royal Greenland fish factory come aboard for halibut tasting.

The food is good: there is fresh fish, salads, stewed reindeer and post-snooze tea and cake. My fellow passengers (mostly British and German) are a hardy bunch and wear a uniform of walking boots and waterproofs. At midnight on Midsummer's Day, most forego sleep to congregate on deck, huddled in blankets and sipping red wine, to gaze at the low sun and extraordinarily clear blue sky. EMMA LOVE

SAIL AWAY

Hurtigruten (+44 20 3603 7112; www.hurtigruten.co.uk) offers a 12-day Land of the Inuit cruise, departing 12 and 22 June 2016, from £4,822 per person, including flights between Copenhagen and Kangerlussuaq, transfers and a Kangerlussuaq excursion



LISBON TO DOVER

Champagne corks pop and sushi masters swoop in on a jolly jaunt in the Atlantic

Brandy tasting at the Otard distillery in Cognac, a pilgrimage to Lourdes, a hair-raising helicopter ride over the vineyards of the Médoc, cooking classes at the Michelin-starred Le Saint-James restaurant in Bouliac: these are just a few of the many onshore trips offered during this two-week voyage on the *Crystal Serenity*. The food, too, is as good as it gets on the high seas, from snacks at The Bistro to the homemade pasta sauces at Prego, a traditional Italian restaurant right down to the huge pepper mills. At the Crystal Dining Room, how something looks on the plate matters as much as what it tastes like. Guests can nibble teriyaki chicken and dip salmon sashimi in soy sauce at Silk Road and The Sushi Bar, both of which present dishes by the master Nobu Matsuhisa (once a year he comes onboard to cook and give demonstrations). The wines served with dinner in all of the restaurants are carefully chosen, but the impressive cellar list – which includes such eminences as La Tache and Didier Dagueneau's Silex; great Aussies Leeuwin Estate and Henschke; old vintages of Dom Ruinart Champagne and lesser-known superb-value bottles of Mas La Plana Cabernet and Guigal's Hermitage – is irresistible. Staff remember your name and your foibles (mine: no ice in water, Champagne in a white-wine glass not a flute please). Afterwards, for cigar aficionados there is a self-contained, air-conditioned retreat with full humidors. In fact, the ship has everything any reasonable hedonist could wish for, including huge beds and spacious cabins, most of which have balconies (on the new, all-suite, yacht-style *Crystal Esprit*, which launches this month, every cabin comes with a balcony – a real revelation). Tiny tots to teens are looked after at the kids' club while you tackle those curious pastimes you probably don't usually have time for: bridge, knitting and ballroom dancing (all ham-fisted beginners welcome). The entertainment is extensive, with singers, dancers, even acrobats and a comedian with a guitar. One afternoon a charming all-female Russian string quartet perform classical music in the Palm Court. Inevitably, there is a degree of hype: the cinema is called Hollywood, the paddle-tennis courts Wimbledon. The computer room styles itself the University@Sea Centre. One only wonders why The Library is modestly called that and not The Bodleian. But then there is no British stiff upper deck on a Crystal cruise. You're sailing on a slice of the USA. The real USA. And this is the special ingredient that pervades the vessel like the atmosphere in an F Scott Fitzgerald story. You mingle with friendly Americans; businessmen and their wives, older academics and families – at least half of whom have booked with Crystal before. It's a cliché of cruising that a ship is a city on the sea, but this feels more like a luxury town with a thousand inhabitants where the layout is so well planned that you don't keep bumping into the same folk every hour. Disembarking at Dover, I feel like I've been an honorary American for a fortnight, and it's ace. MALCOLM GLUCK



SAIL AWAY

Crystal Cruises (+44 20 7399 7601; www.crystalcruises.co.uk) offers a 14-night cruise from Lisbon to London Tilbury departing 22 May 2016 from £4,079 per person, including a flight to Lisbon, overseas transfers, accommodation in a deluxe stateroom, all meals and most drinks

PHOTOGRAPHS: **BRUNO MORANDI**

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ATHENS TO VENICE

Here's a fantastically fresh approach to some of the Mediterranean's greatest hits

It's the evening of the officers' party on the *Odyssey*, an 11-deck super-luxe ship from the Seattle-based cruise supremo Seabourn. Around the pool are crisp-white-uniformed sailors who've temporarily left the bridge to man their snack posts: towers of plump pink prawns; bite-sized rare roast beef; fat Greek olives shiny as marbles. The band plays soft-jazz tunes and all about are happily hobnobbing people, faces quickly having become familiar during the week aboard. That's the thing about the boutique-style *Odyssey* – with just 450 guests and masses of space it can be as intimate (or not) as you like. When we walk into The Colonnade restaurant to have breakfast on the first full day at sea the staff already know our names. Chat to perennial cruise-goers and they'll all tell you that Seabourn is hot on service. It starts with Champagne and canapés delivered to your suite while you're still discovering the walk-in wardrobe and bathroom, and continues flawlessly for the rest of the holiday. The food is delicious, especially the beef which is sourced from farms north of Seattle. And there's a lot of choice: go for Italian and Greek dishes at a candlelit table in The Colonnade or glam up and head to The Restaurant for cheese soufflé and lobster. (This season, Seabourn has hooked up with super-star chef Thomas Keller from The French Laundry). Either way, a Dirty Martini at sunset is the best way to kick off the evening. After dinner, there are high-octane performances by the ship's singers and dancers, and a sax player belts out bluesy numbers in the late-night bar. During the day guests can go on tours to World Heritage sites, a real selling point for Seabourn – these are exclusive shore experiences through its alliance with UNESCO. On this trip it means visiting the ancient city of Butrint – with the bonus of getting to see Albania, one of the world's most cut-off countries until the fall of the Iron Curtain – and Dubrovnik. The site at Butrint is beautiful, and relatively uncrowded compared to better-known historic headliners. We stroll through woods of oak and eucalyptus with an excellent guide to see ruins from four civilisations who have laid claim to this low-lying plain: Hellenistic, Roman, Venetian and Ottoman. In hugger-mugger Dubrovnik a proud Croat and history expert whips us up to the cable car for views of the walled town and tales of how it was bombed from on high in 1991, and then walks us around its cobbled streets. As an extra-special treat at the end, we get to see dozens of gilded relics brought back from the Crusades, including the armour-covered arm bone of St Blaise, which glints in the little-visited Cathedral Treasury. The non-UNESCO tours are great too. On a boat trip around the Ionian Sea's Princess Islands, we swim off the beach where Jackie O was famously papped topless and visit pirates' coves. At an organic olive farm in the Peloponnese there's ouzo-fuelled dancing thrown in after lunch. Of course, you could decide to spend your days in the spa and flopping by the pool eating ice cream. And no one would mind one bit. GRAINNE McBRIDE

SAIL AWAY

Seabourn (+44 843 373 2000; www.seabourn.com) offers seven-day Athens-to-Venice cruises on the *Seabourn Odyssey* from £3,185 per person, including meals and drinks



WE SAILED INTO VENICE AS DAWN WAS BREAKING. EVERYTHING WAS TINGED WITH ORANGE LIGHT. WHAT A RARE SIGHT TO GLIDE PAST A SERENE ST MARK'S SQUARE, EMPTY BEFORE THE DAYTIME HORDES ARRIVED



PHOTOGRAPH: **ALISTAIR TAYLOR-YOUNG**



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This is as far out as it gets – a wacky experience with freaky rituals and irridescent creatures

The six-passenger chopper takes off from atop our ship and heads out low over flooded rivers and sago plantations, clearing primitive villages and jungle thickets before landing near a spirit house in the remote village of Yentchen, one of a sprinkling along the almost mystical Sepik River in Papua New Guinea. Inside the huddle of thatched houses, a group of half-naked young men, wearing only a few modesty leaves around their waists, dance about. Their heads are caked with river mud, the skin on their backs and shoulders shines red raw from recent razor cuts patterned to replicate the stippled skin of a crocodile. In a long-established custom on the 700-mile-long Sepik, ash and mud is then pounded into the wounds as their skins 'tan' around charcoal fires. 'We are from the crocodile,' explains one of the initiates. 'This trademark is passed down from generation to generation.'

Witnessing this rare ritual is one of the high points of the 11-night Sepik Soiree cruise on the *True North*, which sails across the Bismarck Sea and 70 miles of the Sepik River to Kavieng. Along the way, we visit markets piled high with tropical fruits and river fish, local villages selling colourful wooden masks, carved coconuts and traditional wooden penis caps, and island communities where we are welcomed with enthusiastic 'sing-sings'. I'm captivated by the sheer exotic nature of the country: the fabulously-plumed birds of paradise, brown and gold tree kangaroos, heavily beaded tribal outfits, New Guinea crocodiles, active volcanoes, misty jungle highlands and the scattered settlements along the Sepik.

North Star Cruises first started luxury voyages in the Kimberley, Australia's far north-west region, nearly 30 years ago, and in 2005, with the arrival of *True North*, introduced Papua New Guinea to its schedule. The 164ft long vessel was specifically designed for expeditions: with a draft of just seven feet it eases into tidal river systems, manoeuvres tricky coastal waters and can venture where few others dare.

Following a private-charter flight from Cairns, I had joined 35 other adventure-loving passengers in Madang. The boat has a refectory-style dining room, stylish bar where guests gather before and after supper, a sundeck for drinks and a well-kitted transom that bustles each morning as the young, energetic all-Australian crew help guests prepare for the day's activities – perhaps snorkelling, diving or fishing for elusive nuigini black bass from the six aluminium-hulled boats. Cruise-goers can snare a catch for the kitchen – barracuda for niçoise salad, yellowfin tuna for sashimi, Spanish mackerel for fish and chips – while the excellent chefs buy succulent painted crayfish en route from islanders who bring their crustaceans alongside us in shallow, dug-out canoes. TRICIA WELSH

SAIL AWAY

North Star Cruises (+61 8 9192 1829; www.northstarcruises.com.au) offers an 11-night Sepik Soiree voyage along the north-east coast of Papua New Guinea, down the Sepik River and through the Bismarck Archipelago to Kavieng, departing 8 and 19 November 2016. Price from £9,315 per person staying in an Ocean Class cabin, including all excursions and return private-jet transfers from Cairns in Australia (scenic flights in the ship's helicopter are additional)

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP LEE HARVEY



CHINA

Get up close to one of the world's most controversial dams on a magnificent expedition down the Yangtze

A gigantic feat of civil engineering seems an unlikely focus for a five-star cruise, but this is China, where many come to stare into a confluence of the 21st century's most pressing preoccupations: energy, water security, infrastructure, the environment and, above all, the world's shifting geopolitical sands. None of which are expressed in an edifice more dramatically than the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze. The latest chapter in the history of Asia's longest and wildest river could only have happened here. In 1994 construction started on the largest hydroelectric dam on the planet; by 2008, the water level upstream had risen by almost 100 metres, 1.3 million people had been relocated and more than 1,000 culturally significant sites had sunk beneath the water. That year also saw the launch of Sanctuary Retreats' *Yangzi Explorer*, which capitalised on a new wave of interest in the region with a ship offering unprecedented luxury: a spa, chunky marble bathrooms and balconies on all 58 cabins, plus four enormous suites in the prow. Sanctuary Retreats is increasingly known for its attention to detail, ensuring that once the ship leaves behind Chongqing's migraine of lights for Yichang, the Yangtze – the river that inspired Tang dynasty poets and Ming dynasty painters – flickers into view.

It is a pale and dreamy landscape of flint-coloured water and turquoise camphor trees, the edges blurred by a gauze of mist. Then suddenly the riverbank rears up on either side into the forested peaks of Qutang, the first of the three gorges, its ochre cliffs and crags named after gods and dragons. Excursions include a trip to the partially submerged town of Fengdu to explore the caramelised fug of a food market, and a splashing sampan ride up the Shennong tributary to see one of the area's mysterious coffins hanging off the cliffs. These tours, which culminate with a morning spent at a bizarre, empty theme park dedicated to the Three Gorges Dam, sometimes lurch towards a curious version of propaganda. 'This is Mr Han, he lost his home and all his farmland,' begins one guide, 'he is so happy.' After a final night feasting on regional specialities – including magnificent Wuxi ribs and a challenging egg trio in aspic – and clanking through the dam's five-step ship-lock, we emerge into a dappled vision of the Yangtze as she once was. Water ebbs and flows over chalky cobbles, flecked with jetties and undergrowth, without any of the stark, straight levels of the flooded waterline. Villages and roads lean into the headland in a manner reminiscent of an Italian alpine lake. It's a balmy highlight checked by a note of regret: perhaps 20 years ago would have been a better time to explore. Then again, cruising vessels in the mid-1990s were rusty and hostile compared to the splendour of the *Yangzi Explorer*. SAM KINCHIN-SMITH

SAIL AWAY

Sanctuary Retreats (+44 1242 546609; www.sanctuaryretreats.com) offers a three-night downstream cruise on the *Yangzi Explorer* from £880 per person in a deluxe cabin, including all meals during full sailing days and entrance fees

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES



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CUBA

Leave the rumba of the urban jungle behind and play castaway on the country's coral islands

The sea was 'white as milk' and as 'black as ink' wrote Christopher Columbus in 1494 as his caravel became entangled on one of the sandbanks that wrinkle across the Caribbean. I have been to Cuba dozens of times and travelled the mainland from tip-to-tip, but until recently had never followed in the explorer's wake. Boats have only been permitted to navigate the country's southern coral isles in the last few years, since President Raúl Castro rubber-stamped a series of new measures to kickstart the economy. I board the square-rigger *Star Flyer* – which launched in 1991 as the first of Star Clippers' trio of tall ships – as she departs from the pastel-columned city of Cienfuegos for Havana, a place of rags and riches, soaked in sun, salsa, spirit and socialism. When Columbus sailed he found the sea awash with turtles. Their numbers have diminished but we still glimpse their mottled shells, along with other aquatic creatures. Other than that, not much has changed in the past 500 years. Our looping voyage is mostly made up of stops on uninhabited isles (the port call at brassy Grand Cayman is a rude shock). At Cayo Rico, the sea bed is spangled with outsized orange starfish. Chefs grill spare ribs, shrimp skewers and corn on the cob under a palm-leafed hut for lunch, before we stroll to the other end of this secluded spot to watch pelicans dive-bomb the sea and baby stingray ripple through the gentle currents. Giant, furry tree rats called hutia squeak in the bushes behind. At Punta Francés, on the Isle of Youth (once a pirate hideout and said to be the inspiration for *Treasure Island*), the mangrove-backed crescents of custard-coloured sands hide American crocodiles; at María La Gorda, snorkelling the coral reefs beneath the verdigris water reveals psychedelic parrotfish, angelfish and blue tang. Although the ship carries 170 people, there's an intimacy about it. In the convivial dining room we feast on dishes unheard of on the mainland: basil panna cotta with cherry tomatoes; fillet of sea bass with fennel and bouillon potatoes. Sunset, to the ironic strains of Vangelis's *1492: Conquest of Paradise*, is followed by passengers gathering around Captain Jürgen Müller, Cuba Libres in hand, listening to tales of seafaring lore. I can't help but recall Columbus, who when seeing Cuba for the first time was 'so astonished at the sight of so much beauty' that he famously wrote in his diary: 'I can find no words to describe it.' CLAIRE BOOBBYER

SAIL AWAY

Star Clippers (+44 808 231 4798; www.starclippers.co.uk) offers a 10-night cruise from Havana to Cienfuegos departing on 16 March 2016, from £1,795 per person



PHOTOGRAPH: **ANDERS OVERGAARD**



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DOURO VALLEY

Portugal's once wild and raging river is now just the ticket for a nicely tipsy saunter

It's 5pm on the first afternoon of the eight-day cruise along the river of the UNESCO-designated Douro Valley and I'm standing on the sun deck of the *Queen Isabel*, involuntarily holding my breath the way you do when a car is squeezing through an impossibly tight gap. It's a snug fit: our sleek, low-slung vessel was built to slot exactly into the locks. But it's not just clever design that sets this 118-passenger boat from river-cruise specialist Uniworld apart. Staterooms and suites are light and airy with soothing cream and duck-egg blue colour schemes. There's a spa, a small gym and a pool on the sun deck – a godsend for when summer temperatures skyrocket. The menu is packed with local produce – crisp salads, grilled sardines, succulent pork fillet – and the wine is from nearby vineyards.

At Sandeman's Quinta do Seixo estate in Pinhão, the centre of the wine-making region, I try some dark port and look over the river, which lazily winds its way through the breathtaking valley, flanked by granite mountains with steep tiers of vineyards. A few days earlier at Quinta da Avessada, I sipped on sweet, biodynamic Moscatel and ate blood sausage and chipped potatoes inside the winery's ancient walls. History buffs can hop on a coach from the mooring in Peso da Régua to explore the baroque Mateus Palace. Or spend the day in the sandstone city of Salamanca, across the border in Spain; I loped around the Art Nouveau and Art Deco Museum, watched a dramatic flamenco-dance performance and wolfed down octopus carpaccio in Plaza Mayor, the main square where bullfights were once held.

I visit grand castles and quiet villages with cobbled streets, but it's 'the river of gold' we return to each evening. As darkness falls, pianist Paolo Ayres plays Neil Diamond classics on the grand piano in the lounge bar (ask him to show you his card trick – he's good enough to rival Dynamo). Disembarking in Porto, I'm loathe to say goodbye to the view just yet. So I find a bar in the old town and linger a while longer, and take in the familiar names of the port cellars among the jumble of multicoloured houses on the hillside. PETE WINTERBOTTOM

SAIL AWAY

Titan (+44 800 988 5873; www.titantravel.co.uk), in partnership with Uniworld, offers an eight-day A Week on the River Douro all-inclusive cruise from £1,999 per person. The price includes excursions, meals, flights, transfers and the VIP Home Departure Service



QUEBEC TO BOSTON

Write your own narrative with literary landmarks, mysterious lighthouses and coastlines drenched in history

Holland America's *MS Veendam* is a refined, *grande dame* of a ship. It has a two-million-dollar art collection featuring leaping bronze dolphins by British sculptor Susanna Holt, a modernist centrepiece by Venetian glass artist Luciano Vistosi and a cabinet of pretty 16th-century Dutch porcelain. There's the peaceful spa, elegantly decorated with peacock motifs and mosaic tiles. And there's the opulent Rotterdam Dining Room, where the menu is full of hearty classics (American prime-rib steak, steaming New England chowder) and the lengthy wine list includes claret from film director Francis Ford Coppola's vineyard. There's also the informal Italian restaurant Canaletto, grab-and-go poolside pizza lunches at Slice and a pop-up showcasing French dishes from New York's circus-themed joint, Le Cirque.

The seven-night sail down the Canadian coast from Quebec to Boston in New England is one of the cruise line's most popular. I was hooked from the get-go on the fairy-tale turrets and cobbled streets of Quebec City, the rugged landscapes, carpet of pine forests and the lighthouses that wink like a ghostly presence in the fog. Our stop at Prince Edward Island, the setting for children's classic *Anne of Green Gables*, was a throwback to childhood. I pottered around cute bookshops in the capital Charlottetown and visited the house that inspired Green Gables and Cavendish, the basis for the village of Avonlea. Dreadful weather washed out our time in Sydney, though the giant dockside violin (the largest in the world) was an Instagram opportunity too good to miss. In Halifax, I whiled away several hours in the absorbing Pier 21 immigration museum (Canada's version of Ellis Island), and Bar Harbor was so delightful it could have snowed and I would still have appreciated the colonial architecture of Jesup Memorial Library and the Chinese tea ceremony at Tea House 278.

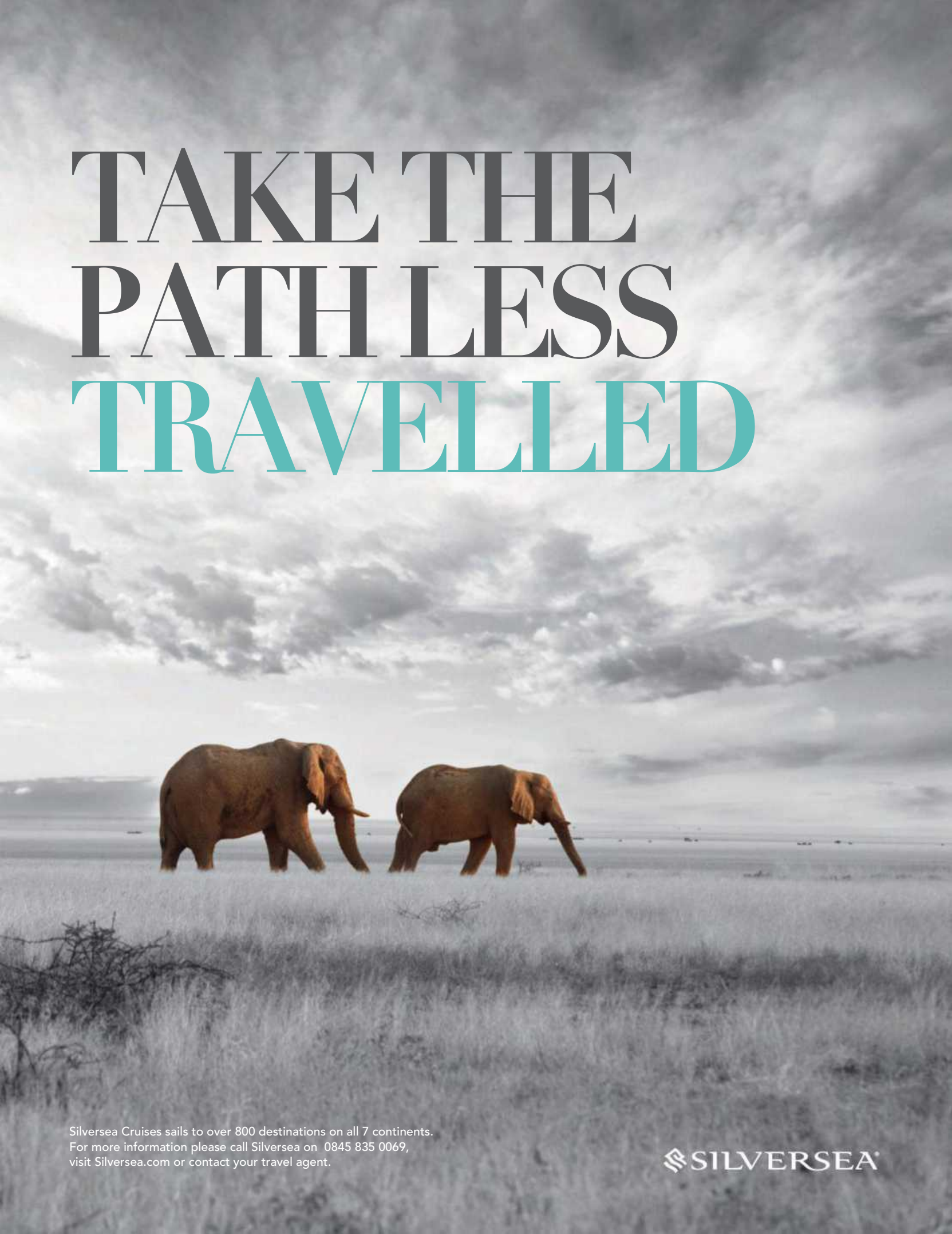
Evenings at sea were spent drinking gin Martinis, watching the marvellously camp catwalk show devoted to Cher's costume designer Bob Mackie, or dancing in the Crow's Nest Lounge, where my companions varied from a professional storyteller in her 70s to the ship's dancers letting off steam. By the last night I was torn between farewells to new friends and the desire to prop up the Cheers bar in Boston. An eye-popping musical send-off from the Rotterdam waiting staff was a finale Debbie Reynolds would have been proud of. Holland America is launching the 2,650-passenger flagship *MS Koningsdam* in April 2016, but for me, its charm lies in smaller boats like this one. KAT BROWN

SAIL AWAY

Holland America (+44 843 374 2300; www.hollandamerica.com) offers a seven-night Canada & New England Discovery cruise from £699 per person, staying in an inside stateroom, departing 7 May 2016. Other dates available



PHOTOGRAPH: PRESTON SCHLEBUSCH


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SILVERSEA



ANTARCTICA

Play it cool as spines tingle on an exhilarating ride into the planet's outer limits

Exactly 100 years after Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition dissolved into a desperate race against death, I'm digging a different kind of grave with Jonathan, the explorer's younger cousin twice-removed. He works as a historian and onboard lecturer for Quark Expeditions, the polar-cruise company, which for the last quarter of a century has taken more passengers to the Arctic and Antarctica on its fleet of seven ships than anyone else. The shallow graves are for protection from the wind as we lie in our bivvy bags under the luminescent night sky discussing Shackleton while fat, whiskered Weddell seals snore nearby.

This is one of many highlights of the 11-day trip, which includes a number of more intrepid options for those after a taste of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration. First we get to grips with ice climbing, attacking one of the smaller peaks with crampons and axes (we gain a mere 200 metres in two hours, which catapults our already healthy respect for Shackleton and his men into the stratosphere). We cross-country ski past deserted science stations, kayak so close to a pod of humpback whales that we see the barnacles on their backs, and paddle board through a parade of glittering, electric-blue icebergs (the first-ever paddle-boarding session to take place on this continent). For each lunch and dinner, we return to the warmth of our ship,



PHOTOGRAPH: **NICK COBBING**

the *Ocean Diamond*, to refuel and swap stories with the other 187 passengers.

Listening to the onboard lecturers, who range from geologists to penguinologists (yes, really), it seems little has changed here in the century since Shackleton got all 27 of his men off this peninsula alive. But one thing that has improved is the food (unless you fancy the penguin meat they endured). Aboard the *Ocean Diamond*, which has a hot tub on the upper deck and a spa, the meals are indulgent. The man in charge, Thomas Pfenning, used to work with Michel Roux Jr before he was lured by the pull of the magnetic south. Shackleton was unable to resist the attraction either. Even after his close scrape with a cold end in 1915 he was back again six years later. To tread in his swashbuckling footsteps just a little; to climb and ski and sleep on this most pristine of continents is a heady cocktail, best served over ice. JONATHAN THOMPSON

SAIL AWAY

Quark Expeditions (0808 120 2333; www.quarkexpeditions.com) offers 11-day Antarctic Explorer: Discovering the Seventh Continent cruises out of the Argentine port of Ushuaia from £3,860 per person, based on three sharing a cabin. British Airways (www.ba.com) flies to Buenos Aires and Aerolineas Argentines (www.aerolineas.com.ar) flies on to Ushuaia

BALTIC SEA

Dress up to the nines for a dandy dalliance with Scandinavia and Russia

I'm jogging around the empty promenade deck of the 90,000-tonne *Queen Elizabeth* somewhere in the Gulf of Finland. Despite there being 2,092 passengers on board, I only catch fleeting glimpses of them: silver-haired couples in bow ties and sequins tucking into escargots à la Bourguignonne in the Britannia Restaurant; groups of friends toasting a Cunard Cobbler (dry sherry shaken with Grand Marnier and orange juice) in the Midships Bar. It might come as a surprise that you can ever find yourself alone at sea on a ship of this size and razzmatazz – 964.5 feet long, 12 decks high, 1,046 staterooms, a theatre bigger than many in the West End, a library with at least 7,500 books and a daily programme packed with ice-carving demonstrations and watercolour classes. But these pockets of peace are easy to slip into if you are looking for them.

We order breakfast in our cabin and sit just the two of us, my mother and I, on the balcony in puffy white cotton robes watching the milky morning horizon. We sip black coffee and spoon passion fruit into our mouths, just catching the edges of countries that test our geography in the distance. (Is that Gotland we're passing? Can we see Latvia from here?). On the Games Deck we play croquet, sending wooden balls skittering with a satisfying clip across the Astroturf, looked upon only by cloche-hatted ladies and tweedy gentlemen in the Twenties-inspired murals around us. And we have the heated, mosaic-tiled relaxation beds in the Royal Spa's thermal suite to ourselves, where we stare out across the glassy grey stillness of the Baltic Sea as the boat motors quietly at a steady 21.7 knots.

In Copenhagen, we drift through the centuries, past the cheerily painted former merchants' houses that line the canals to the vast, 21st-century Opera House, its gigantic canopy steel roof floating like a UFO on the harbour. In Stockholm, chirpy social commentary from our guide Assa (the fact that for all its Viking legend Sweden hasn't been to war in 200 years; gossip about the royal family) sketches in colour as we weave around the city's 14 islands, some filled with Bauhaus apartment blocks, others thick with forest. As we sail out that evening, we pass more islands and islets – there are a staggering 30,000 in the archipelago – dotted with summer cabins and fishing villages. Then it's on to St Petersburg, where gold domes of Orthodox churches glint between neoclassical architecture, before we chug out from the canals and into the mouth of the mighty Neva River to gaze back at the minty marvel that is the Winter Palace.

Many of my fellow guests are here as much for the ship as for where it's sailing. Cunard, I discover, breeds a fierce brand of loyalty (the top sailing couple on our cruise have amounted 506 days at sea, all with Cunard). Heritage and tradition are the company's trump card – no sushi bar or indoor surf wave here. This is as much as trip back in time as it is a meander around Northern Europe. To an era where it doesn't matter that you can't get a decent flat white and where a journey's success is based not on Facebook photo likes but on friends made. And on the fact that the band is always playing in the Queen Room and every whim (from stocking your cabin with your favourite fruit to that special bottle of wine waiting on ice) is taken care of with psychic-like service. FIONA KERR

SAIL AWAY

Cunard (+44 843 374 2224; www.cunard.co.uk) offers a 14-night Baltic Highlights Cruise from £1,949 per person. The trip departs Southampton on 31 May 2016, calling at Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Tallinn, St Petersburg, Kiel and Skagen.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PARK GUELL, BARCELONA; SILVER SPIRIT IN SANTORINI; PROCIDA NEAR NAPLES

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SILVERSEA







LISBON TO BARCELONA

Slide in and shotgun front-row seats in some of Portugal and Spain's most dazzling destinations

Embarking the *MV Tere Moana* I feel just a little bit smug. I've already managed to squeeze in a day exploring the tiled streets of Lisbon, tasted a Portuguese game sausage and a crumbly *pastel de nata* and climbed the steps at the São Jorge castle which overlooks the historic centre of the city. And then I find myself slap bang in the middle of a safety briefing: 44 life-jacket-clad couples surrounded by staff in crisp white uniforms. I feel out of place as I squeeze my massive suitcase through the group whispering apologies as I go. But then the captain leans in, invites me for cocktails on the bridge and apparently my tardy arrival is forgiven. Over a glass of Champagne I notice that practically everyone is already a Paul Gauguin enthusiast, swapping notes on the French-Polynesian trajectory that has given the brand its name. This is about as small as cruise ships come: more gin palace than mega-liner, it doesn't look out of place when anchored in Ibiza's superyacht-stacked marina. And with this comes the ability to get right into those ports when bigger vessels have to anchor out at sea. Since one of the best bits about cruising is dry land – the ability to wake up in a new location and dive straight into a different world every day – this is where the *Tere Moana* comes into her own. Daily excursions are available but the itinerary lends itself to off-piste pootling. In Cadiz we moor in the harbour from which Columbus twice set off to bring back treasure from the New World, just moments from the jigsaw of golden-domed cathedrals and elegant squares where *pan con tomate* and a *cortado* will set you back two euros. Food on board has more of an international flavour: at breakfast there are fluffy buttermilk pancakes made to order, pots of maple syrup and marmalade, mounds of fresh fruit and home-baked croissants. Supper rotates between La Veranda and L'Etoile restaurants, and includes several incredible recipes from chef Jean-Pierre Vigato, of two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Apicius in Paris – such as beef fillet on slow-cooked ox cheek, mushroom and truffle-cream penne. Between the hustle of Lisbon and Cadiz we spend a day on the beach in the Algarve's Portimão. In Gibraltar we hike up the Rock to see gangs of macaques, the only wild monkey population in Europe, and views across the strait to Morocco. And in Granada we dock at Motril where the trip to the extraordinary Alhambra is essential, to see the Moorish palace's geometrically carved wood ceilings, terraced gardens and the marble lions of its grand, 11th-century fountain. Wherever we are, it's always in the heart of action: in Ibiza that means just steps from the whitewashed Dalt Vila; in Palma de Mallorca in the shadow of the Gothic cathedral with a backdrop of not-so-distant mountains. The ship's final destination is Barcelona where I'm sad to leave the grand comfort and charming staff. But finding myself just two minutes' walk from Las Ramblas I'm smug, all over again, that I didn't book a flight straight home. TABITHA JOYCE

SAIL AWAY

Paul Gauguin Cruises (+44 20 7399 7691; www.pgcruises.com) offers seven-night cruises from about £2,762 per person staying in an ocean-view stateroom, including all meals, selected drinks and gratuities

PHOTOGRAPHS: **DAVID LOFTUS**



PHOTOGRAPH: **JORDI CAMI**

BURMA

Tap into a completely off-grid way of life on a trip with a social conscience

Boats can only reach Burma's northern villages in the rainy season when the Irrawaddy River rises by up to 30ft. Belmond's *Road to Mandalay* was one of the first ships to start sailing this stretch from south of Mandalay up to the town of Bhamo near the Chinese border and back to Bagan, famed for its 2,000 pagodas and temples, nearly 20 years ago. It makes the extraordinary Gorges of the Far North voyage just twice a year.

Despite the number of visitors increasing massively in the last year or so, we see hardly any. Our only companions on the sludgy water are lone fishermen wearing conical hats, who steer canoes with single-sheet sails that billow in the breeze, and small cargo ships trailing rafts with bundles of teak logs. There are beautifully woven bamboo houses on stilts; red-clay cliffs where locals search for gold; monks on motorbikes; women bent down by the banks washing pots and scrubbing clothes, and farmers working in rice fields. But however the landscape changes, the glinting pagodas and pointy stupas that symbolise this breathtaking country remain.

We are alone too when we pull up to Nwe Nyein, a village known for producing ceramic urns, and watch crouching potters turning the wooden wheels. We see a man doing a silent walk in the rain at Thein Pa Taung Meditation Centre and spend a morning cycling around on trishaws in Katha, a town made famous in George Orwell's novel *Burmese Days*. At the market there are stalls selling turmeric-stained chickens, pickled fish and thanaka bark, which women smear on their cheeks as make-up.

The food onboard, overseen by Thai chef Imm, is terrific: one day a Burmese buffet with Mohinga soup, sticky banana rice and pennywort salad; another a feast of Indian curries (there are always Western options too). Everything is handmade, from the apricot-and-walnut bread to the rum-and-raisin ice cream. What also makes Belmond stand out – apart from the elegant 43-cabin boat, the illuminating afternoon lectures on politics and Buddhism, and the expert on-the-ground support team – is its long-established social contributions programme, which has had an impact at several stops along the route. Children in green-and-white school uniforms shout out *'Mingalaba'* (hello) from the banks as we drop off stationery supplies. And in Male we watch a novitiation ceremony, funded by Belmond, where boys as young as seven are carried around on thrones in a colourful procession before having their heads gently shaved and donning monks' robes for a trial stint in a monastery. Like the rest of the trip it's a real glimpse of rural life – and it feels like an absolute privilege. EMMA LOVE

SAIL AWAY

Belmond (+44 845 077 2222; www.belmond.com) offers a 12-night trip from £5,905 per person, including one night at Belmond Governor's Residence in Yangon, a full-board cruise from Mandalay to Bagan, flights, transfers and excursions. For the 2016 season only, this trip is aboard the *Belmond Orcaella*



NORWAY

A *Frozen*-themed voyage puts a Disney spin on the fjords

For many, Norway is synonymous with vertiginous rocks, lusekofte jumpers and smoked fish. For Disney fans, it means just one thing: *Frozen*. The film's Arendelle may be fictional but its turreted buildings and waterside setting were based partly on real locations on the country's west coast. It seems surprising that Disney Cruises has taken so long to launch a trip here; less so that die-hard followers signed up fast for a place on its inaugural journey last summer.

The *Disney Magic* is a themed ship with room for 2,700 passengers, and has the usual big-boat entertainment (theatres, bars, restaurants, swimming pools), but all with a massive dose of Disney sparkle. As it pulled out of Copenhagen harbour, a Sail Away party with a leg-kicking Donald Duck, a high-energy dance troupe and lots of jumping children set the tone for the trip. Karaoke, dinner and drinks events are laid on for adults prepared to leave their offspring at the kids' club until midnight, where dressing-up parties are elevated by the arrival of Cinderella teaching them how to wave like a royal. Nightly musicals are almost West End standard and you can buy tickets for character meet-and-greets (tip from my six-year-old: it's almost certainly the real Anna, but probably not the real Elsa – she's definitely wearing a wig).

It's easy to be so distracted by the activities that you forget to look out – at the grey-tinged landscapes where flat scrubland is speckled with red-roofed houses backed by purple mountains and the cliffs of Geiranger fjord. In the town of Stavanger clapboard buildings line cobbled streets, and the boat booms its arrival with the first notes of *When You Wish Upon A Star*. Although there are options to climb Pulpit Rock, *pictured*, or visit a traditional village, many guests stay onboard in a state of semi-permanent fantasy. The food may be average and the style a bit tired, but the effort at every level is laudable: you have to embrace the theme, put your reservations aside and *Let It Go*. EMILY MATHIESON

SAIL AWAY

Disney Cruise Line (+44 800 171 2317; www.disneycruise.co.uk) offers a seven-night Norwegian Fjords cruise on *Disney Magic*, departing 29 May 2016 from Dover, from £1,082 per person

PHOTOGRAPH: JONAS JACOBSSON

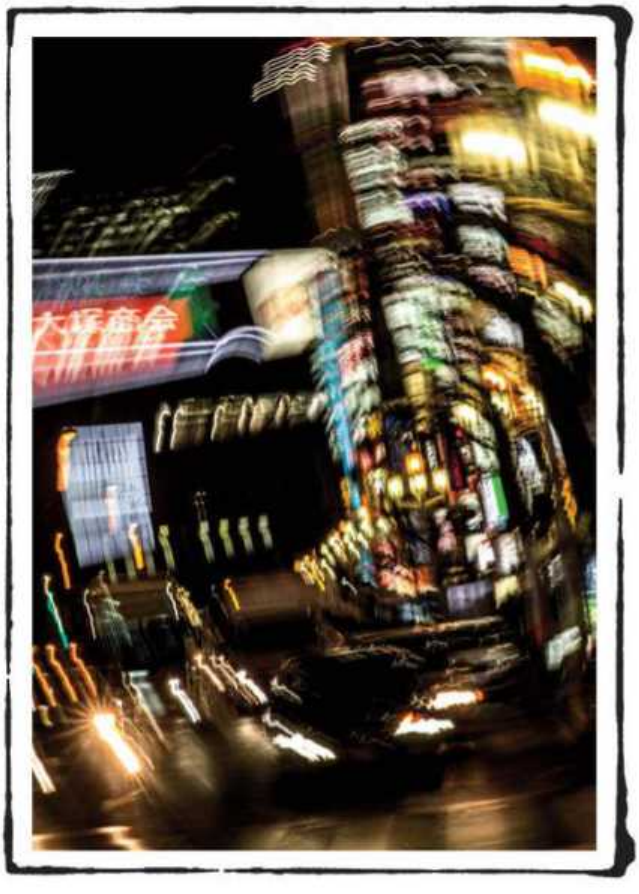
BEST FOR BRUSHES WITH THE BIZARRE



JAPAN

It's the land of love hotels, manga cafés and Shinto shrines, but will a voyage around half the country help you join the dots?

Ponant is a French company that promises to do things *à la française*. Based on the Best of Japan cruise that I took, I'd say they're pretty thoroughgoing in this respect. I didn't see so much as a bowl of steamed rice on *L'Austral* – a chic mega-yacht with 132 cabins – let alone a piece of raw fish or a pair of chopsticks. The wine list, however, was excellent, particularly the Burgundy and Bordeaux sections; and anyone who enjoys the spectacle of Caucasian lovelies in tights lip-synching to Edith Piaf numbers amid puffs of dry ice will have been well satisfied. True, a few nods were made in the direction of the outside world. There was a lecture on 'Life in Japan' and a screening of *The Last Samurai*. On one evening of uncharacteristically high swell, the resident troupe of can-can dancers gamely attempted a routine on the theme of 'Asia' on a challengingly tilting upper deck. But perhaps the Gallic aspect of life aboard *L'Austral* was just as well. Japan itself provided more than enough exotica. The nine-day cruise started in Osaka and made its way clockwise towards Maizuru, with half a dozen or so stops along the way, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I remember waking up one morning to a weird tinkling sound – at once alien and familiar. I opened my curtains and stepped out onto my tiny balcony and there, on the pier not 30 feet below, was an entire contingent of Japanese child prodigies bashing out the overture to *Figaro* on xylophones. Later I joined an excursion to visit some traditional samurai dwellings in the village of Chiran, where honest-to-goodness sword-wielding warriors used to live. The dwellings are noted for their stylised gardens in which rocks signify land masses and finely raked sand represents the sea. But Nature decided to have a laugh at Art's expense. The heavens opened and the sand that was supposed to imitate water was submerged under actual water. Our charming local guide did her best to keep spirits buoyant with twirls of her umbrella, little leaps in the air and exclamations of 'Singin' in the rain! Ha ha ha! We're just singin' in the rain!' On another memorable occasion I visited the Taga shrine in Uwajima. The shrine itself, set among trees a few streets back from a freeway, was pleasant. The surprise was the building alongside it – a vast museum of pornography. Three storeys of wall-to-wall hardcore. Drawers and cabinets overflow with the stuff. The very ceilings themselves are papered with it. The same be-robed Shinto priest who swept the steps to the shrine sold me a ticket to the temple of smut. 'No photo,' he said sternly. The Best of Japan? It was my first visit to the country and I haven't got a clue. But a curious, remarkable introduction? *Absolument*. STEVE KING



SAIL AWAY

Ponant (+33 4 88 66 64 00; www.ponant.com) offers a nine-day Best of Japan cruise from £2,500 per person based on two sharing

PHOTOGRAPHS: **BILL PHELPS**

ALASKA

Gather your cubs and plot a course for the USA's north-western frontier – and be sure to keep an eye out for grizzlies

We leave Seattle not a moment too soon. My son has become addicted to pinball after I find a museum blinking with vintage machines. His eyes sparkle with jackpot lights. There will be other things with flippers in Alaska. Sea lions and whales and bears, oh my. Across the water, the land fades to a smear, clapboard houses huddle together. I imagine no-nonsense Kathy Bates types driving rusty pick-ups, caulking hulls. We sail up Puget Sound, past Vancouver Island and into what feel like uncharted waters. Though really this is a liquid Route 66, criss-crossed by fur traders, missionaries and pan-handlers, shoals of fishermen. Captain George Vancouver mapped out its coast, Tlingit warriors kept the sea gods appeased. Adverts for the first cruises appeared in the 1880s: 'Look for grand scenery – want to get rich?'.

There's a wonderful American sailing expression: gunk-holing. It means to nose about small inlets, drop anchor in hidden coves. Our ship, the *Celebrity Solstice*, is 1,041 feet long with 13 decks and a real grass lawn, and therefore really good for onboard gunk-holing. We find nooks in the library, hot tubs by the pool, sofas by a Dixieland jazz band. Walking to the bow one evening, I'm gobsmacked to see a basketball game in full swing, the floodlit court glowing as we sail into the clouds. Sometimes we just gunk-hole on our private deck, taking tea and petits fours. One day, a miniature rainbow materialises above the waves and follows us along.

The Suite Class is new this year for the Celebrity Cruises fleet. It brings a friendly butler to arrange in-cabin breakfast, and a dedicated restaurant, Luminae, where there's usually an ocean-side table free. The daily-changing menu is strong on seafood, light and inventive – grilled barramundi with fava-bean pesto; fennel soup with lobster and pomegranate. At times, being on the ship is like being at one big, sprawling wedding party. Girls in heels pirouette outside to sober up, excitable kids gather for slumber parties. On stage in the theatre, we see hypnotism and close-up magic, tangling trapeze artists and a wildlife expert called Brent, who's so passionate about humpback whales that we rush onto the deck afterwards and scan the horizon for crinkly pectoral fins.

Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway are small, spit-in-your-hand-and-shake towns that still feel on the edge, waiting to be engulfed by pine trees and mist. We snaffle blackened-halibut tacos, whoop at a lumberjack show. But the real action lies out there, a hike or seaplane hop away: watching bears scoop salmon from spawning streams, ziplining over waterfalls, riding a sledge pulled by huskies. One morning we slip away from the *Solstice* on a smaller boat, just 20 of us, to the South Sawyer Glacier. The seals reclining on icebergs have seen it all before, but the glacier wall is mesmerising, supernatural blue – as startling against the surrounding brown rock face as a ghost floating down Wall Street. On the way back, a group of humpbacks put on a show, tails hovering above the waves before crashing down. Like the trip, it's a tantalising glimpse of something larger, deeper. We don't get rich, but the scenery is just grand. RICK JORDAN

SAIL AWAY

Celebrity Cruises (+44 844 493 2043; www.celebritycruises.co.uk) offers a nine-day Alaska Sawyer Glacier cruise from £2,449 per person, including return flights from London to Seattle, transfers, accommodation in a balcony stateroom and all meals

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE SHOWALTER


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PHOTOGRAPS: **DAVID DOUBILET**

AUSTRALIA

Tuck into a flavour-packed feast along the east coast

From the flaky pastries and biscotti served with shots of espresso at the Baristas coffee bar to the precisely cut finger sandwiches and petits fours in the traditional afternoon tea, it doesn't take me long to work out that life onboard *MS Insignia* revolves around the food. This is not what I had expected. Although part of Oceania, the self-billed foodie cruise line, the 684-passenger *Insignia* lacks the heavy culinary clout of some of its sister ships: it doesn't have an onboard cooking school, for example, or the dizzying amount of dining options of the larger vessels. Yet there is still plenty to fill up on. I have joined the liner at Cairns for the last leg of a marathon five-week crossing from Shanghai to Sydney, and my fellow passengers have already established their routines. Active types catch up over shuffleboard or at the putting green before games of mah-jong or line dancing. Classical-music fans never miss a performance of the string trio, while others kick back after dinner at the cabaret show as they work their way through the menu at Martinis bar (there are more than 30 variants of the eponymous drink: the Beefeater Mar-Tea-Ni, made with Earl Grey, is particularly good). Some hole up in the spa, switching between Pilates and stretch classes, facials and hairdressing appointments, interspersed with the occasional session in the steam room. I gravitate towards the small art studio where, under the guidance of artist in residence William Ritzi, guests turn out surprisingly good paintings. And, of course, I eat. I graze the buffet at the Terrace Café and munch on burgers at the poolside Waves Grill but it is the Grand Dining Room that quickly becomes my regular haunt. The space feels surprisingly intimate and with a new lunch and dinner menu every day – chicken yakitori, Marseillaise fish soup, steak frites – I never get bored. I'm also a fan of the Polo Grill and Toscana, the only restaurants which require bookings. The French onion soup at the former is one of the best I've ever tasted; the latter wins my heart by offering a choice of 10 types of olive oil with the bread. The only time I miss a meal is when I'm out on an excursion. At every port passengers can decide between adventurous full-day outings – snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, a four-wheel-drive tour around Mount Tamborine in the lush Gold Coast hinterland – or more sedate half-day options. These might include inspecting crocodiles and kangaroos at Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo or simply taking a river cruise through Brisbane. Which to choose? Look at the day's menu, then decide. UTE JUNKER

SAIL AWAY

Oceania Cruises (+44 845 505 1920; www.oceaniacruises.com) offers a 36-day Shanghai to Sydney cruise on *MS Insignia* on 3 April 2016 from £5,339 per person



VENICE TO BARCELONA

Casinos, cocktails and Monte Carlo? Roll the dice on a whirlwind tour around southern Europe's star sights

In Barcelona the lure of being led to its best bits, like an excitable, responsibility-free child, proved too strong to resist, and I left the Regent Seven Seas Cruises *Mariner* for my first organised shore excursion. While the local guide's insights were both educational and amusing ('Catalans eat a small sandwich at 12pm, have a cake and coffee at 3pm, and dinner at 9pm. We have a very set schedule'), seeing the place from the wrong side of a coach window was not enough. I wanted to feel the scorched pavements, smell its beery breath, be hassled by street sellers and get paranoid about having my purse stolen. So later, taking advantage of how close to the action the ship had docked, I moseyed for 10 minutes to the Ramblas, supped a glass of sangria larger than the waiter's fist and gazed at the faces going by.

Two days before, I had boarded in Monte Carlo where the *Mariner* – so large in comparison to the higgledy-piggledy hill of a city – was berthed. I joined the crowd of almost uniformly beaming British and Americans half way through the seven-day trip. They had already blitzed Venice, Trieste, Zadar, Kotor, Positano, Rome and Florence. Compared to other boats, the *Mariner* is positively boutique: 700 guests cared for by 445 crew. Such a ratio means it feels spacious and eternally spotless; greetings from staff tinkle at your every turn as you navigate the labyrinthine 12 decks. There are three rooftop hot tubs, a pool, spa with sauna and steam rooms, casino, six restaurants – steakhouse Prime 7 and French Signatures are stand-outs – a DVD library (even though the films you never got around to seeing at the cinema last month are already set up on your in-suite television) and a theatre.

Such superabundance is common among the cruise set. What really marks Regent Seven Seas out from others is its inclusivity. Want a frosted glass of prosecco with your sea bass on the roof deck of Italian restaurant Sette Mari? It's included. Fancy watching the magnificent Lipizzaner horses at the historic Lipica Stud Farm in Slovenia? You can. Only those after Wi-Fi, spa and beauty treatments need reach for their credit cards at all. Like a regal, doting auntie, the *Mariner* sure knows how to hostess. BECKY LUCAS

SAIL AWAY

Regent Seven Seas Cruises (+44 2380 682159; www.rssc.com) offers a 10-night all-inclusive cruise from Venice to Barcelona from £3,739 per person, including flights, transfers and shore excursions

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As the ship glided around another impossible granite wall, we heard the rumble of Stirling Falls ahead. And then, there it was – 500 feet of tumbling magnificence! Yet another wondrous sight that makes the glacier-formed fiord of Milford Sound the jewel of New Zealand's South Island. Now to dry off from the lovely Stirling shower (we were that close), followed by champagne at the Stardust lounge and dinner at Nobu's Silk Road.

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